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The general epistle of St. James.



THE CHURCHMAN'S BIBLE

General Editor

JOHN HENRY BURN, B.D.

The General Epistle
of St James

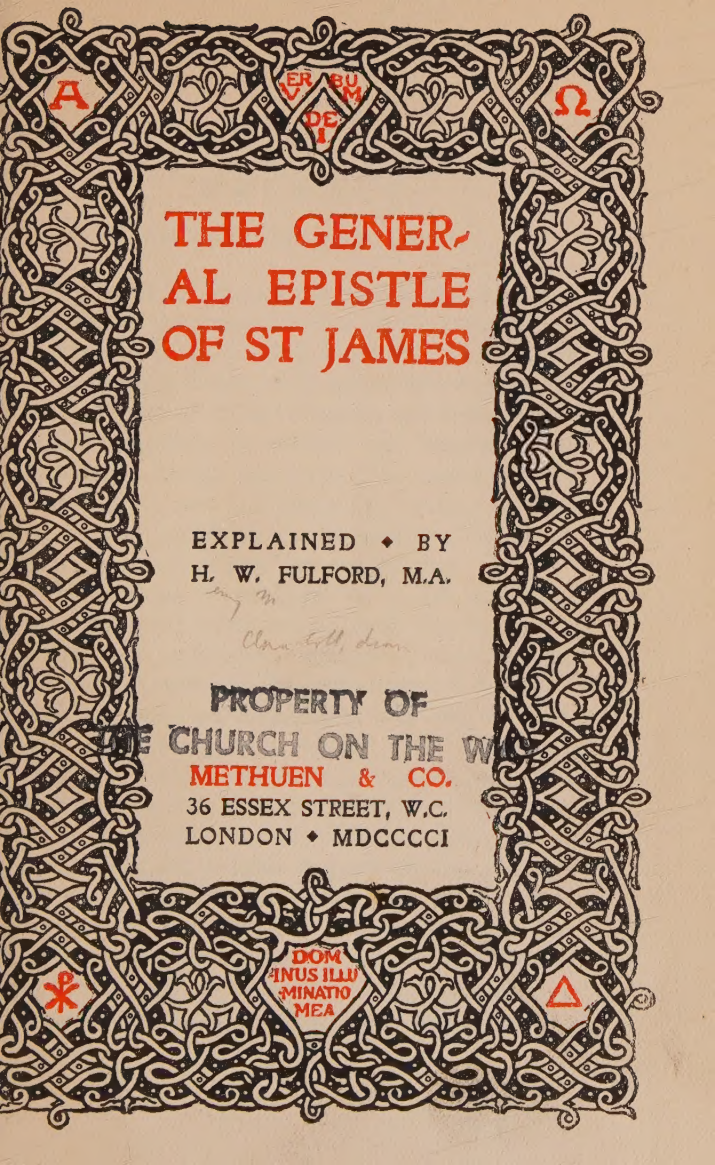
THE GENERAL
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OF ST JAMES

EXPLAINED ♦ BY
H. W. FULFORD, M.A.

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PREFACE

BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

THIS series of Expositions is intended to be of service to the general reader in the practical and devotional study of Holy Scripture. The Editors of the several Books, while taking into account the latest results of critical research, will make it their main endeavour to exhibit and emphasise the permanent truths and principles underlying the Sacred Text, and to indicate the bearing of these truths and principles on the spiritual, the moral, and the social life of the present day.

Each Book is prefaced by a full and clear Introductory Section, setting forth what is known, or may be reasonably conjectured, respecting the date and occasion of the composition of the Book, and any other particulars that may help to elucidate its meaning as a whole. The Exposition proper is divided into short paragraphs, which are grouped together in larger sections corresponding as far as possible with the divisions of the Church Lectionary, and a Table is given shewing the days on which the different sections are appointed to be read at Morning and Evening Prayer. The translation of the Authorised Version is printed in full, such corrections as are deemed necessary to bring out the sense being placed in footnotes.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

I

THE opening words of the Epistle of St James in themselves throw little light on his identity. He is, they tell us, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." The name James (Jacob), although it does not occur in the Old Testament except as borne by the Patriarch, was naturally a favourite with the Jews, and in the New Testament we read of several men bearing this name. Which of them is the writer of the Epistle? Many considerations make it well-nigh certain that it was "James the Lord's brother," who seems to have been converted by a special appearance of the Risen Christ (1 Cor. xv. 7), and who afterwards became Bishop of the Church at Jerusalem¹ and Head of the Jew-Christian community dispersed

¹ Of course the Greek word for Bishop was not used to designate the chief pastor of a church *exclusively* till later; but the episcopal office is older than the word afterwards applied to it, and it is clear that St James performed what we should call episcopal functions, and was treated with special respect by St Peter, St Paul, and the other Apostles.

throughout the world. We have in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts the remarkable speech of St James as President of the Council of Jerusalem, and also a circular letter most likely drawn up by him. The style and language of both these strikingly resemble those of the Epistle. Moreover, the whole tone and teaching of the Epistle agree closely with what we know from Scripture and early tradition of the character and position of St James 'the Just.'

(i.) Though ready to give full liberty to Gentile converts, he was himself a strict observer of the Law. In the Epistle stress is laid on the duty of observing the whole Law. The Law, as interpreted by Christ, is a Royal Law (ii. 8).

(ii.) Again, the Epistle is Judaic and prophetic in tone, displaying a wide knowledge of the Old Testament and certain of the Wisdom-Books of the Apocrypha. This is what we should expect in a work of one who had spent his life in Palestine,¹ and had from childhood been familiar with the sacred books of his race.

(iii.) Often, again, the author of the Epistle reproduces our Lord's teaching, sometimes in language closely resembling that of the Gospels. The Lord's

¹ It is interesting to observe that the Epistle contains various allusions to the natural phenomena of Palestine—the former and latter rain—the sweet and bitter springs, etc.

"brother,"¹ even though he did not fully believe in Him during His earthly life, must have had many opportunities of hearing Him. Again, we know that St James was held in great respect by all his fellow-countrymen. Who so fitted as he to write an Epistle which, although primarily intended for *Christian* Jews, is addressed to Jews generally?

(iv.) And then there is in the Epistle a tone of authority which would naturally be adopted by the Head of the Church in Jerusalem. The only other James whose claims to the authorship of the Epistle have been seriously urged is "James the brother of John," the son of Zebedee. But the date of his martyrdom (A.D. 44) makes it in the highest degree unlikely that he could have written it. We conclude then that, in the words of St Jerome, 'James, who is called the brother of the Lord, known also as the Just, wrote one Epistle only, which is one of the seven Catholic Epistles.'

From Scripture and early tradition we are able to form a clear conception of his character. In his early years he doubtless received such religious

¹ We can readily understand why St James would shrink from speaking of himself as the Lord's brother. He will not know Christ after the flesh (2 Cor. v. 16), especially as he had failed to acknowledge Him during His earthly life. This Epistle and that of St Jude are the only ones where the writers announce themselves simply as "servants of God."

education as would be given in every devout Jewish household. The strict training in Judaism had a great influence on his whole life. He gave up nothing of the devout observances or of the deep convictions of a pious Jew, even after he was converted to the religion of Christ. As to the manner of that conversion we are told in the so-called 'Gospel according to the Hebrews' that our Lord 'appeared to James, for he had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which the Lord had drunk the Cup till he should see Him rising from the dead.' 'Jesus therefore took bread and blessed it and brake it, and gave it to James the Just, and said to him, "My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man has risen from the dead."' This passage, as Lightfoot points out, confirms the interpretation already given of 1 Cor. xv. 7; while 'it is characteristic of a Jewish writer that an appearance, which seems in reality to have been vouchsafed to James to win him from unbelief, should be represented as a reward for devotion.' The allusion of Acts i. 14 makes it certain that those brethren who had been scandalised by our Lord's work when He was on earth were now His humble followers.

When next we meet St James he is Head of the Church at Jerusalem. He receives St Paul on his return to Jerusalem three years after his conversion (Gal. i. 18). To him St Peter sends a special message announcing his deliverance from

prison (A.D. 44). He presides over the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv.). To him is due its final decision, which, while in all essential things it gave full liberty to Gentile Christians, yet in non-essentials, such as the eating of things strangled and blood, made a wise concession to Jewish feeling—a principle surely of wide application to present-day missionaries! At Antioch St Peter, in presence of ‘certain who came from James,’ changed his attitude towards Gentiles (Gal. ii. 12), although it can hardly be doubted that St James would not have approved of his action. St Paul, at the end of his second missionary journey, goes up to Jerusalem, most likely to report progress to St James; and again after the third missionary journey he does the same. It is on the latter of these visits that St James makes the characteristic suggestion (Acts xxi. 18), that St Paul should shew his loyalty to the law of Moses by taking part with others in what we should now call a ‘Retreat’ in the Temple, in fulfilment of a temporary Nazirite vow. The suggestion was unfortunate in its result, at any rate so far as St Paul’s personal liberty was concerned; but the fact that St James made it proves conclusively that, in his view, a Hebrew Christian might be, and should be, a devout and loyal observer of the Law of Moses. At this point the narrative of the Acts leaves him, and we must go outside the New Testament if we would learn or conjecture more of his life. Clement of Alexandria

tells us, that to James the Just, John, and Peter, the Lord, after the Resurrection, imparted the gift of knowledge; and he goes on to say that there were two Jameses—one the Just who was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and beaten to death by a fuller with a club, and another who was beheaded.

Josephus, in a passage which has by some¹ been regarded as an interpolation, tells us that after the death of Festus the procurator and before the arrival of his successor, Ananus, a Sadducean High Priest, seized the opportunity of bringing St James before the Sanhedrim, and causing him to be stoned to death; but that many of the Jews strongly protested against the cruel action of the High Priest. This account, if it is to be accepted as accurate, would make the date of the martyrdom about A.D. 61. The story of his death is told at much greater length by Hegesippus, a convert from Judaism to Christianity, who flourished in the second century. After speaking of St James's austerities and frequent prayers, and stating that his fellow-countrymen had given him the privilege of entering the temple,² he goes on

¹ Dr Hort (*Judaistic Christianity*, p. 148) says: 'I see no good reason to question the genuineness' of the passage relating to St James in Josephus (*Ant.* xx. ix. 1).

² This seems to be the meaning of the words 'the Holy Place,' although it is startling to find anyone who was not a priest permitted to enter the actual temple. It is said, however, to have been a Nazirite privilege.

to describe the manner of his death. 'When many of the rulers also believed,' he says, 'there was a stir of the Jews and scribes and Pharisees, saying that the whole people would look to Jesus as the Christ. . . . Then the fore-mentioned scribes and Pharisees set James on the pinnacle of the temple, and cried to him, "O thou just one, to whom we are all bound to listen, since the people are going astray after Jesus who was crucified, tell us what is the door of Jesus." And he answered with a loud voice, "Why do ye ask me concerning Jesus the Son of Man? He is both seated in heaven on the right hand of Power, and will come on the clouds of heaven." And, when many were convinced, the same scribes and Pharisees said, "We have done ill in bringing forward such witness to Jesus. Let us cast him down." And they cried out, saying, "Ho, ho, even the Just one is gone astray." And they went and cast the Just one down; and they said one to another, "Let us stone James the Just." . . . And when they were stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab cried out, "Stop! what do ye? The Just one is praying for you." And one of them who was a fuller smote the head of the Just one with his club. And so he bore his witness. . . . And immediately Vespasian began the siege.'¹

¹ We may notice in this narrative certain reminiscences of the Epistle—the 'door of Jesus' recalls chapter v. 9; the frequent prayers and intercessions suggest chapters i. 5 and

It will be observed that Hegesippus seems to regard the murder of St James as filling up the measure of the guilt of Jerusalem, to be punished by her destruction by the Roman army. He also places the date of his death some years later than Josephus does.

It only remains to notice that the order for the celebration of the Holy Communion, once used in the Church of Palestine,¹ bears the honoured name of James, who is commemorated in it as the Chief of Bishops, Apostles, and Martyrs, and the Brother of God.

Whatever may be the exact historical value of the accounts of Josephus and Hegesippus, they give us, when combined with what we read in Holy Scripture, a clear and definite idea of the character of St James, and the nature of his influence. He was emphatically a Just man, in the Jewish sense of the word. He kept the Law, not from constraint, but willingly, with loving zeal, in the very spirit of the 119th Psalm. His uprightness and earnestness, his courage and absolute devotion to truth, caused him to be respected and revered by all his fellow-countrymen. He has been well described as 'an honest, conscientious, eminently practical, conciliatory, Jewish-Christian saint, the right man in the right place and at the right time,

v. 14-18. The pinnacle of the temple may be the very one mentioned in St Matthew iv. 5 and St Luke iv. 9.

¹ Still used at Zante on the Festival of St James.

although contracted in his mental vision, as in his local sphere of labour.' To him Christianity presented itself as a purified and 'fulfilled' Judaism, as indeed it must have done to many of his fellow-countrymen who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Problems connected with the future relationship between a dying Judaism and a living Christianity, as affecting patriotic Jew-Christians, do not seem to have presented themselves to him as they did to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. St James was contented to go on walking by the light he had, and bravely doing his duty in loyal faith. 'A narrow stay-at-home life, and a limited outlook,' it may be said. Perhaps so. But certainly a life from which we in these restless days may learn much-needed lessons of duty and patience and quietness. A clear view of right and wrong—boldness in rebuking slander and evil-speaking and Mammon-worship and inconsistency of life—these are precious possessions for a teacher in all ages of the Church's history, and not least in our own. And then St James possessed in a marked degree that rare combination of qualities—strong personal convictions together with a broad-minded sympathy with the views of others. He heartily welcomed the Pauline Gospel of liberty for the Gentiles;¹ while for himself he lived in strict obedience to the Law of Moses.

¹ Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, p. 153.

II

The question as to the exact meaning of the term "Brother of the Lord" is one which has been much discussed. Was St James (1) our Lord's first cousin, or (2) His brother in the ordinary sense, or (3) His half-brother, *i.e.* the son of St Joseph by a former wife?

At first sight it seems as though only one answer were possible—namely, that he was our Lord's brother in the ordinary sense; but further inquiry shews that other answers are, if not probable, at any rate not unreasonable.

In A.D. 383 St Jerome put forward the view, called after him the Hieronymian, that St James was our Lord's first cousin. 'James the "brother" of the Lord,' he says, 'is called an Apostle by St Paul. He must therefore be identical with James the son of Alphæus, and with James the Less, who is said by St Mark (xv. 40) to be the brother of Joses.' It does not appear that St Jerome held this view very strongly, but his great influence caused it to be eventually accepted throughout the Western Church.¹ The compilers of the English Prayer-Book, by appointing a portion of St James's Epistle to be read on the festival (1st May) of SS. Philip and James the son of Alphæus, follow the

¹ The Eastern Church has always distinguished them, as did the *early* Roman martyrologies.

Roman Church in identifying the two. Many eminent writers of the English Church have advocated St Jerome's view, and have further identified Alphæus and Clopas (St John xix. 25). If it were possible to accept this idea, we should get rid of one difficulty. If St James were the Lord's disciple as well as His brother, we should understand his great knowledge of His teaching, and should further reduce the number of apostolic men named James from three to two. On any other hypothesis James the son of Alphæus disappears entirely from the narrative of the Acts, his place being taken by another James. But the difficulties in the way of its acceptance seem insuperable. It is *possible* that the Greek word for 'brother' may be used for 'cousin'; but it is in the highest degree unlikely, especially as the writers of the New Testament must have known the proper Greek word for 'cousin,' which actually occurs in Col. iv. 10. The brethren of the Lord almost always appear in the Gospels with the mother of the Lord (St Mark vi. 1-6, iii. 20-22). In none of the lists of the Twelve is there any hint that any of them was a brother of the Lord. Indeed, the brethren of the Lord are distinguished from the Apostles in Acts i. 13, 14; 1 Cor. ix. 5, and (possibly) in Gal. i. 19.¹ St John (vii. 5) ex-

¹ The best rendering of the words of Gal. i. 19 seems to be (save Peter), "I saw no other of the Apostles, *but only* James the Lord's brother."

pressly states that our Lord's brethren did not believe on Him during His earthly life. The wife of Clopas (identified with Alphæus¹) was called Mary. It is inconceivable that, in a humble family, there should be two sisters bearing the same name, although such a thing sometimes occurred in a royal family like that of Herod the Great, who had many children and several wives. A modification of this view, advocated in the *Guardian* of June 7, 1899, supposes that St James was a son of Mary and a Clopas, who, as Hegesippus tells us, was a brother of St Joseph. This avoids some difficulties, but has not the advantage of identifying St James the Apostle and St James the Lord's brother.

The second view that St James was full-brother of our Lord is known as the Helvidian, from Helvidius, a contemporary of St Jerome, who, writing against an exaggerated idea of the sanctity of virginity, says that St Mary bore children after she had borne our Lord. Tertullian, almost alone among the Fathers, seems to have held this view, which has been advocated in recent times by Professor J. B. Mayor and Dean Farrar² among others. It is urged that this is the only theory consistent with a reasonable interpretation of St

¹ It may be added that the identification of Clopas and Alphæus is more than doubtful.

² Who, however, speaks of St James as our Lord's *half-brother* (*Early Days of Christianity*, ii. 33 (1882)).

Matthew i. 24 and St Luke ii. 7; and that if our Lord were not the eldest son He would not have been the Heir of David's line.

The third view is known as the Epiphanian, from its advocacy by Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, in the fourth century. It was almost universally accepted in the Church, and seems to have been held by the great majority of the Fathers.¹ In recent times it has received the weighty support of Bishop Lightfoot in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, and has been accepted as probable by a leading Presbyterian divine (Dr John Watson, of Liverpool²). It meets the reverential feeling which, rightly or wrongly, shrinks from the thought that the wedded life of the mother of Jesus was like that of other women. In support of this view it has been urged that the

¹ Origen, who died in A.D. 253, not only declares himself in favour of this view, but mentions the 'Gospel according to St Peter' and the 'Protevangelium' as supporting it. Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* (ii. 1) says that Joseph was our Lord's *reputed* father, and hence St James was called the Lord's brother.

² His exact words are worth quoting. 'Certain have held,' he says, 'that these men were His full-brothers, that is the sons of Joseph and Mary; but against this it must be urged that the whole bearing of these brethren is that not of younger but of older men; that, if they had been the sons of the Virgin, Jesus would have committed her to their charge before His death; and also that, after the birth of Jesus, to suppose that Mary was the mother of children by Joseph is to many minds profane.'—*Life of Jesus Christ*, iv.

passages from St Matthew and St Luke do not of necessity imply that St Mary had other children—that the whole attitude of the ‘brethren’ towards our Lord, as described in the Gospels, is that of *elder* brothers—and that Christ’s dying words from the Cross, entrusting His mother to the care of St John¹ (St John xix. 26), shew clearly that she had no other sons of her own.

On the whole, the choice seems to be between the Helvidian and Epiphanian theories. With our present evidence certainty is impossible. But we may at least be permitted to urge that, where Holy Scripture is not explicit, the view of a long series of Fathers and Doctors, supported as it is by sober-minded and moderate English theologians, should be allowed considerable weight. Those who, with them, hold the ‘Epiphanian’ to be on the whole the most reasonable theory, are sometimes told that it implies a slur on Holy Matrimony, and tends unduly to exalt the Virgin. But St Paul himself, than whom no one has more lofty views of marriage (Eph. v. 25), says that there are circumstances in which virginity is better (1 Cor. vi. 8). That the danger of undue exaltation of the

¹ It is at least possible that, as Dr Westcott thinks, the words “His mother’s sister” in St John xix. 25 refer not to another Mary, but to Salome, wife of Zebedee. In that case St John would be our Lord’s first cousin. St Joseph, the husband of our Lord’s mother, must have died before He began His ministry.

Virgin and consequent dishonour to the Man Christ Jesus is a very real danger, is proved by the attitude of modern Roman Catholics towards her. But Epiphanius himself expressly warns us against it. 'While we do due honour to the Virgin,' he says, 'we must beware of deifying her' (*Haer.* lxxviii.). The English Churchmen who hold the theory of Epiphanius are not likely to disregard his warning.

III

The Epistle is addressed to "the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad," *i.e.* to the Jews throughout the world—ideally still twelve tribes (*Acts* xxvi. 7), although actually most of the tribes had disappeared. It has sometimes been said that St James, like St Peter after him (1 *St Pet.* i. 1¹), addresses only those Jews who lived in various parts of the East; but there is nothing in the Epistle to indicate such a limitation, which indeed would seem to be disproved by the fact that it was early known and read in parts at least of the West. These Jews of the Dispersion played a very important part both in the history of Judaism and in the spread of the faith of Christ. The earliest 'dispersions' were those brought about by the Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors, who, follow-

¹ St Peter's dedication is probably intended to include *Gentile* believers. St James's certainly does not.

ing a custom of the times, forcibly removed large numbers of Hebrews from their homes in Palestine to distant colonies "by the waters of Babylon" and elsewhere. Later on, Ptolemy, son of Lagus, removed thousands of Jews from Palestine that they might settle in other parts of his dominion; and, later still, Pompey the Great took many as slaves to Rome. But besides these colonists by force there were also large bodies of colonists by inclination who settled in various great centres of trade and commerce. In fact, these Jews of the Dispersion were far more numerous and far more influential than their brethren who stayed at home. The 'colonies' had outstripped the mother-country.

But the 'colonists' always looked to Jerusalem as their religious capital, with a love even more intense than a Roman Catholic feels for Rome, or an Anglican in India or the Colonies for Canterbury. They strove, if possible, to go up to Jerusalem for the three great festivals. They were present in large numbers at the Feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given to the Church (Acts ii. 7-11); and, doubtless, many took with them to their distant homes the good news of the Gospel which they had that day heard from St Peter. These frequent journeys to Jerusalem kept the Jews of the Dispersion in touch with the faith of their fathers, even though most of them were ignorant of the holy language, while their knowledge of

Greek — then a well-nigh universal language — enabled them to preach their religion to Gentiles, and so to make numerous proselytes. On the other hand, their intercourse with their Gentile neighbours had its influence on them. They got to know something of Greek thought and philosophy and culture. With it all, they never lost those stubborn race-characteristics which to-day make the Jew the wonder of the world.

St James, then, in writing to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion, is writing 'Urbi et Orbi.' As a true patriot, he is grieved to the heart at the sins he sees prevalent among his countrymen—greed, bitterness of speech, undue reverence for rank and riches as such, a barren and fruitless orthodoxy. That these sins were common in Jerusalem he knew from painful experience ; and, as the pilgrims came up, year after year, from all parts of the world, to keep the great festivals, he would have many opportunities of learning that the old besetting sins of the race were still powerful among the Jews of the Dispersion.

But his special message is to the devout Remnant, the true Israel that had accepted Christ as the Messiah in Whom all the old covenant was fulfilled. It may be that many of those to whom he is writing, especially those in far-distant lands, knew little of Christianity beyond this, its central fact ; but, if they knew only this, they had gained that which was essential, and would read the

Epistle to the benefit of their souls' health and the fuller understanding of the truths of Christianity.

'Because he is writing to the Twelve Tribes at large, he does not dwell with any fulness on the higher mysteries of the Kingdom, but is content to call on his countrymen to live by the light they have, in the conviction that, by so doing, they would be led to know of the doctrine whether it were of God.' 'Because he is writing for those who shared his faith and hope, he does not shrink from the confession of his belief in Jesus as the Christ, or from impressing on those who were to read his letter the solemn thought that He was the Judge, and that His coming was not far off.'¹

The question of the original language of the Epistle has sometimes been raised, but the true answer to it is supplied us when we remember that it was addressed to Jews throughout the world, the great majority of whom did not understand either Hebrew or Aramaic, while all of them would be able to read Greek.

IV

It has usually been held that in the Epistle of St James we have the earliest of the New Testament

¹ Plumptre, *St James*, p. 38 (*Cambridge Bible for Schools*).

writings, and that it forms, as it were, a golden bridge between the Old and New Testaments. It is pointed out that the theology and christology of the Epistle are of the simplest character. There is little dogmatic teaching, and a remarkable absence of definite Christian phraseology. There is no reference to Gentile Christianity or to the perplexing questions affecting Gentile converts, to decide which the Council of Jerusalem sat. On the other hand, there are numerous allusions to persecutions by rich (? Sadducean) Jews, and to the poverty of the Church. It has even been thought that chapter ii. 15-18 contains a direct reference to the generous help given by the disciples in Antioch to their brethren at Jerusalem (Acts xi. 29). In the oldest MSS. of the New Testament this Epistle is placed not only first of the 'Catholic' Epistles, but before any of St Paul's Epistles. These considerations seem to point to A.D. 49 as the probable date of the Epistle—a year or two before the date of the earliest of St Paul's Epistles (1 Thess.). Some recent scholars¹ argue for a later date, about A.D. 61. The main point urged in favour of this view is that St James, in his teaching about faith and works, seems to be tacitly removing certain one-sided inferences drawn from St Paul's language in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. If this is so, then obviously our Epistle must have been written after some of those

¹ Wordsworth, Farrar, Hort, and others.

of St Paul.¹ It is also pointed out that the growth of respect for persons, the sense of delay in the Second Coming, and the condition and wide dissemination of the Churches to which it is addressed, 'make it necessary to assume that a considerable time has elapsed since the day of Pentecost.' The question is not an easy one to determine, although the balance of probabilities points to the earlier date; nor is it of great importance, if we remember that, in any case, our Epistle is 'the earliest in spirit,' even if it be not the earliest in point of time.

V

In the first ages of the Church our Epistle was not universally known, and in the West it seems to have had a somewhat limited circulation, especially in Africa. It is possibly alluded to in the Epistle of Clement, Bishop of Rome, to the Corinthians (A.D. 90); and Hermas, who also wrote from Rome before the middle of the second century, had evidently studied it. It was not included in the list of books of the New Testament known as the Muratorian Canon, and Eusebius of Cæsarea at the beginning of the fourth century says that doubts were current as to its genuineness, but that it was generally read in the churches. In the East it was, as we should expect, better known than in the

¹ But see pp. 99-100 for further a discussion of this question.

West. It is found in the ancient Peshitta Syriac Version¹ and in the oldest Egyptian Versions. St Jerome, who lived for many years at Bethlehem, and knew the views of the Eastern Church, says that it was written by St James, and that, as time went on, it gained authority. All this is natural enough. A short letter, addressed by a Jew-Christian to his fellow-countrymen, would at first be little known among Gentile congregations. Perhaps also the idea, false but plausible, that there was some antagonism between St James and St Paul militated against the immediate reception of our Epistle in some Churches; while again the letter of a stay-at-home like St James would not be so readily circulated as those of a traveller like St Paul. But, even if the acceptance of the Epistle by the Catholic Church was somewhat slow, all doubts had disappeared early in the fourth century. The Councils of Laodicea (about A.D. 364) and Hippo, and the Third Carthaginian Council, reflected the universal opinion by giving it its rightful place among the inspired writings, and from that time to this no successful attempts to dislodge it have been made. Luther's hasty opinion that it is 'an epistle of straw' has not been endorsed by the great

¹ In the oldest MSS. of the Peshitta it is called an Epistle of James the Apostle. Some early printed editions state, on what authority is unknown, that the three Epistles of SS. James, Peter, and John were written by the three witnesses of the Transfiguration.

majority of his own followers. Recently it has been argued by Harnack and others that it was written in the middle of the second century A.D. ; while Spitta has maintained the opposite view, that it is a work of the first century *before* Christ, slightly altered in order to give it a Christian tone. Both these theories, which indeed are mutually destructive, have been dealt with at length by Professor J. B. Mayor in the Introduction to his second edition (pp. 154-178) of his Commentary on the Epistle, and by Dr Zahn¹ in Germany. It may suffice to say here that the simplicity and absence of dogmatic teaching found in the Epistle are as unlike as possible to what we should expect in a writing of the second century ; while a Christian, working over and editing for Christian use a pre-Christian document, would have made it more obviously and definitely Christian. Besides, it is not easy to see where he could have found so deeply spiritual a document among the productions of the first century B.C.

We conclude that, to a Catholic Christian, the verdict of the ancient Church, confirmed by the decisions of the Councils of Laodicea, Hippo, and Carthage, is the only possible one. With humble gratitude he accepts the Epistle as the genuine work of St James, the Lord's brother.

¹ *Einleitung in d. N. T.* pp. 52-108.

VI

St James is one of the most original of New Testament writers; but at the same time he frequently reproduces the thoughts and words of those who have gone before him. And he, in his turn, has influenced later authors, especially St Peter. So that the general principle, that we must not study any book of the New Testament as an isolated document, is peculiarly applicable to the Epistle of St James. It has already been pointed out that he displays, and assumes in his readers, familiarity with the Old Testament. Not only does he quote from it, but he frequently draws his illustrations from it. Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah are referred to as examples. But, besides the Canonical books of the Old Testament, St James seems to have studied with special care the two Apocryphal books which we know as Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. Doubtless he was attracted by the eminently sane and practical character of these works. What he says on the use of the tongue was very likely suggested by a passage from the twenty-eighth chapter of Ecclesiasticus; while the first chapter of our Epistle is full of resemblances, which can scarcely have been accidental, to passages from that book and the Wisdom of Solomon.¹

¹ For instance, compare St Jas. i. 2-4, 5, 6-8, 12-17, 23,

But far more important than these are the parallels between the language of St James and the teaching of our Lord, especially that part of it afterwards recorded for us in the Gospel written for the use of Jews by St Matthew. We may take as striking examples the language about swearing (St Jas. iv. 12 ; St Matt. v. 34-37), judgment of others (St Jas. iv. 11 ; St Matt. vii. 1), "faith" without works (St Jas. iii. 10-13 ; St Matt. vii. 16, 21-23), patient continuance in well-doing (St Jas. i. 12 ; St Matt. x. 22 ; St Luke xxi. 19), idle words (St Jas. iii. 1, 2 ; St Matt. xii. 36), humility (St Jas. i. 9, 10 ; St Matt. xviii. 4), and riches (St Jas. v. 2, 3 ; St Matt. vi. 19). In fact, the Epistle is full of the thoughts, and sometimes the very words, found in the Sermon on the Mount.

Resemblances which have been discovered by some between our Epistle and those of St Paul¹ are on the whole less striking, and, if they are admitted, can be explained on the assumption that St Paul was acquainted with the Epistle of St James. On the other hand, the coincidences between the Epistle of St James and the First 25 with Eccclus. ii. 1-15, i. 26, vii. 10, xv. 11 ; Wisd. vii. 18 ; Eccclus. xii. 11, xiv. 23. Note also St Jas. v. 3 and Eccclus. xii. 10.

¹ We may compare St Jas. i. 2-4, 22, ii. 10, 21-23, iii. 1, 13, iv. 1, 11 and Rom. v. 3-5, ii. 13, Gal. v. 3, Rom. iv. 1-5, 16-22, ii. 17-22, vii. 23, xiv. 4. In several of these instances St Paul's language seems founded on that of St James.

Epistle of St Peter¹ make it fairly certain that the latter Apostle deliberately reproduces some of the thoughts and words of St James, whose letter would be very familiar to the Eastern Christians addressed by St Peter. The Epistle of St Jude, which begins, "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James," seems to appeal to the authority of the elder and better-known brother, and possibly refers to our Epistle.

Thus we see that the Epistle of St. James is linked to the Old Testament and the Apocrypha on the one hand, and to the Gospel and certain of the Epistles on the other. And it is specially interesting to notice how closely it is connected both with the Gospel of St Matthew and with the Epistle of the Jew St Peter, who, through failure and weakness, had at last learned that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

VII

While it is true, as has been already pointed out, that the Epistle of St James contains little dogmatic Christianity, it is equally true that it is essentially and throughout Christian. If the name of Jesus Christ occurs but seldom, the teaching of Jesus

¹ Compare St Jas. i. 3, 11, 25, iv. 6, v. 20 and 1 St Pet. i. 7, 24, 12, v. 5, iv. 8.

Christ is found pervading the whole Epistle. It may well be, indeed, that the same spirit of reverence which led a devout Jew to avoid uttering the sacred name Jehovah has caused St James to be sparing in his use of the name Jesus; but we can hardly fail to observe the deep feeling of the allusion to His sufferings in chapter v. 6 ("Ye have condemned and killed the Just: He doth not resist you"), or the significance of the references to that great subject of the apostolic teaching in the earliest times—the Second Coming of our Lord to judgment. There seems to be an allusion to Holy Baptism into the name of Christ in chapter ii. 7, and what looks like an unrecorded saying of Christ in chapter i. 12. May it not be said also that the frequent exhortations to strive to become like God are characteristic of Christian theology? Again, the constant and tender use of the word "brethren" is essentially Christian. Custom may have staled for us the true significance of the word; but it is the Incarnation that gives to it its meaning. Everywhere in the Epistle we find the Lord's teaching reproduced. Everywhere it is the Christian ideal which St James sets before his readers. Herein lies the true answer to such theories as that of Spitta, alluded to in a previous section. A Christian editor of a Jewish treatise for the use of Christians would have made of it a document at once more Christian in appearance and less Christian in reality.

The Epistle does not readily lend itself to analysis. Like 1 St Peter, it deals chiefly with Christian practice; unlike most of St Paul's Epistles, it contains no long and difficult argument. It is largely made up of rebukes,¹ sometimes as stern as those of the old Prophets, and of encouragements to the faithful under their trials and persecutions. We may at first sight be startled at finding such rebukes needful for a Christian community. But we know from St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians that the Christian communities of very early times did fall into grievous sins, and even in Jerusalem the peace of the Church did not last long. The crime of Ananias and Sapphira was the beginning of a series. Indeed, we make a serious mistake if we regard the earliest days of the life of the Church as ideal either in faith or in practice. The Church is ever to be reaching forward. Her golden age is to be in the Future, not the Past. It does not seem to have been part of the Divine purpose to create a Church perfect from her birth. She, too, has to pass through infancy and childhood until at last she becomes full-grown (Eph. iv. 13). Hence we do not (with Harnack) see in the picture of the Church drawn for us by St James

¹ Possibly some of the rebukes may be intended for non-Christian Jews. The proud and wealthy oppressors of chapter v. would include unbelieving Sadducees (see note on p. 53).

an argument for a late date; but rather a proof of an early one. To St James at any rate it was not surprising that the Jew-Christians should take with them into the Church not only their old beliefs, but also the besetting sins of their nation.

But St James's readers required consolation as well as rebuke. "The Lord delayeth His coming," was their cry. Their sufferings and their persecutions had made them impatient. This again is natural enough. It is a feeling which may well have arisen among Jew-Christians, as it did among the less emotional Macedonians of Thessalonica, quite early in their history. St James has to give the same consolations to his readers as St Paul does to his converts in his earliest Epistle (1 Thess. iv. 11-18; St Jas. v.). From both St James and St Paul the manner of the Coming was hidden.¹ The great overthrow of Judaism in the destruction of Jerusalem (which was also in a sense the birthday of the Catholic Church), was indeed at hand—a veritable Coming to Judgment, and a fit type of the final Coming for which the Church still waits. But the knowledge of these things was not fully given to St James. Yet, despite of this, or perhaps more truly because of this, his words of exhortation and encouragement have gained a new and deep meaning for the whole Church. They have a wider and fuller application

¹ For a further discussion of this point, see Excursus I. p. 99.

than he knew, just as his rebukes of what were then specially Jewish sins have become terribly needed in these latter days of the Church's life.

Underlying all his rebukes and consolations we may detect one great central thought. St James the Just takes the old watchword of his countrymen, "Hear, O Israel, the LORD thy God is one Lord," and gives it a fresh and profound meaning. God is One, not only as contrasted with the gods many of the heathen, but also in His own nature. Men sometimes credited Him with contradictory attributes. They dared to say, for instance, that God can tempt man to sin—that He gives evil as well as good gifts—that, in fact, He is not wholly loving, perfectly good, absolutely self-consistent. Whether this false idea of God arose from a misconception of certain expressions in the Old Testament we cannot say. At any rate it was there, lurking in the minds of some at least of St James's readers, and he combats it emphatically. With God, he says, there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (i. 17). Nature might be perpetually changing. God is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. His character contains no contradictory elements—no inconsistent attributes. From this great fundamental doctrine naturally arises another. If God is one, man, made in His image, must be one also—not double-minded¹

¹ See a valuable sermon on this subject by the Dean of Christ Church in the volume called *The Spirit of Discipline*.

(i. 8), not a hearer without being a doer (i. 22)—not inconsistent and half-hearted in religious observance (i. 26, ii. 1), or in obedience to the Law (ii. 10), not professing a barren “faith” (ii. 14), not using the tongue for cursing as well as blessing (iii. 9), not making the vain attempt (St Matt. vi. 24) to give part of oneself to God and part to pleasure (iv. 4). In short, in St James’s view, inconsistency of life is utterly unworthy of men whose high prerogative it is to have been made in the image of God. Against this grievous fault he is fighting almost all the way through his Epistle. Some of the special results of this inconsistency may have been characteristic of the Jews of St James’s time; but the source from which all such sins spring poisons the life of the Church to-day, as it did then. There has always been need of such protests as those of our Epistle against inconsistency of life; but they seem to be specially needed now when attendance at public worship has become fairly general, and the services have been made attractive; when unjust judgments and cruel misrepresentation of opponents are too frequent in the ‘religious’ press; when the followers of Christ are eager in the pursuit of wealth and pleasure; when practice is often divorced from profession. It is good for us to go back, under the guidance of St James, to first principles. It is good that his noble ideal of life should be ours. Man is tempted and tossed to and fro. In his nature flesh and

spirit are at war. But after all he is the child of God. And since this is so, he can, by His help, become what he is intended to be—like unto Him.

A TABLE

SHEWING the days on which the several sections of this Book are appointed to be read in the Lessons at Morning and Evening Prayer.

Chapter.	Morning Prayer.	Evening Prayer.
I.	November 22	June 9
II.	November 23	June 10
III.	November 24	June 12
IV.	November 25	June 13
V.	November 26	June 14

The following passages are selected for reading among the Epistles :—

I. 17-21	Fourth Sunday after Easter
I. 22-27	Fifth Sunday after Easter
I. 1-12	Festival of SS. Philip and James

[On the whole, the divisions into chapters correspond, in our Epistle, with the various subjects treated of, except that the passage iv. 13-v. 6 forms a section by itself.]

EXPLANATION
OF THE
TEXT OF THE BOOK

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CHAPTER I

THIS chapter deals with various topics which, at first sight, seem not very closely connected. But in fact they are united one with another in two ways: (1) St James links topic to topic by repeating in a subsequent sentence an important word which he has used in a previous one. Thus in verse 1 we find the word "greeting" (literally '*joy* be with you'). In verse 2 we have "count it all *joy*." In verses 3 and 4 we have the noun "*patience*," and in verse 12 the corresponding verb. Again, the word "*lacking*" in verse 4 is repeated in the "lacketh" of verse 5. In verse 15 is a remarkable word translated "bringeth forth" in the Revised Version. This is repeated in verse 18. In verse 19 we are bidden to "be swift *to hear*." The thought is taken up in verse 23, where we are told that hearing *by itself* is not

enough. (2) All through the chapter there is the underlying thought of the 'oneness' of God, and the duty of man to strive after a similar 'oneness'—a whole-heartedness which, in its measure, may be a reflection of God's.

The first chapter is an excellent specimen of St James's style. It recalls sometimes the words of the Hebrew prophets, sometimes those of the writers of the 'wisdom' books. Indeed, the book *Ecclesiasticus* is the best commentary on St James's first chapter. His sentences are short and almost abrupt. He plunges at once into the heart of a subject. He has a picturesqueness and directness of expression peculiarly his own. He speaks with the authority that comes not only from his official position, but especially from his moral earnestness and sincerity.

We must notice the way in which St James uses certain words. (1) The most important of these is 'temptation.' We are at once reminded of the clause in the Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."¹ The word, as used by St

¹The question 'How is it right to pray not to be led into temptation, if we are to "count it joy when we fall into divers temptations"?' is answered by Hooker, *Ecccl. Pol.* v. xlviii. 13. He quotes a letter of St Augustine in which he says: 'In those tribulations which may hurt as well as profit, we must say with the Apostle, What we should ask as we ought we know not, yet because they are tough, because they are grievous, because the sense of our weakness flyeth them, we pray according to the general desire of the will of man that God would turn them away from us, owing in the

James, implies both trial from without and what we specially call temptation—trial from within. The first of these senses is the more prominent in verse 2, the second in verse 12. A trial need not become a temptation, but in fact it often does. (2) The word “faith” is here and in chapter ii. 1 used in its higher and almost Pauline sense. To St James quite as truly as to St Paul the Christian life is a life of faith. It is not till we come to chapter ii. 14 that the word is used to denote the ‘*optimi corruptio*’—the false “faith” of the unpractising Jew. (3) The word “religion” of verse 26 denotes religion in its external aspects—public worship and the like. (4) Lastly, the word “patience” of verse 3 denotes, not an apathetic sitting down under calamity, in dumb and listless resignation, but a patient continuance in well-doing which is essentially Christian. See Rom. v. 3; 2 Thess. i. 4.

- 1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered
 2 abroad, greeting.¹ My brethren, count it all joy
 3 when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing
this, that the trying of² your faith worketh patience.
 4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye

¹ joy be with you.

² that which trieth

meantime this devotion to the Lord our God, that if He removes them not . . . we expect greater good at His merciful hands with (by) godly sufferance of evils.’ See also Butler’s *Analogy*, i. 4.

5 may be perfect and entire, wanting³ nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not ;
 6 and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea⁴ driven with the wind and
 7 tossed. For let not that man think that he shall
 8 receive any thing of the Lord. A double-minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.⁵

³ lacking

⁴ doubteth is like the surge of the sea

⁵ He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

After a greeting to his fellow-countrymen scattered through the world, St James, "the bond-slave of God and Christ," begins the Epistle. His first topic is the use and value of trial¹ (temptation). Trials are manifold in form, but all are alike in this, that they may at last result in unmixed joy, if only we will use them aright. Those trials that test our faith work out in us a character that is of infinite value. If we meet them in the Christian spirit, they will result in patience. But something more even than this is needed, if we are to be full-grown men, complete in all respects. We need true *wisdom*, so that we may be able to take wide views of life and temptation. Well, we must pray for it. God, our loving Father, will give it us in full measure, not grudgingly or after the fashion

¹ The teaching is similar to that of the other Epistle addressed to Jews—that to the Hebrews (xii. 11). The Jews were specially liable to depression.

of men who give, and grumble as they give.¹ But we must pray with whole-hearted faith. The man who prays without faith has a radical defect in his character. He is tossed to and fro by wind and wave, when he might be safe in port.

Such faithless prayers, arising as they do from 'a dualism of life and aim,' are worthless, and will not be answered. Further, they shew the man in his true colours. His whole life is like his prayers—unstable—unsettled.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice¹ in that he is
10 exalted : but the rich, in that he is made low :
because as the flower of the grass he shall pass
11 away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a
burning heat,² but it withereth the grass, and the
flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion
of it perisheth : so also shall the rich man fade
12 away in his ways.³ Blessed *is* the man that
endureth temptation : for when he is tried,⁴ he
shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord
hath promised to them that love him.

¹ exult ² with the scorching sirocco, ³ in his goings.

⁴ hath been approved,

Trials, as I said, are manifold. Poverty is a trial; the possession of riches also is a trial.²

¹ Ecclus. xli. 22.

² Compare the words of the Litany: 'In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our wealth (prosperity) . . . Good Lord deliver us.' I regard the "rich man" as not a member of the Church. Cf. St Luke xviii. 18-27 for the teaching of the passage.

Poverty is a trial for the Christian of low degree who is called upon to bear it; but yet the poor brother, the humble Christian, should rejoice and even exult under it. For let him think of his Christian privileges. He is a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. What an exalted lot! But the rich outsider—what of him? Riches, too, are a trial and a temptation. The rich man should exult in the loss of all that wealth which, while it seemed to elevate him above his fellows, really kept him out of the Kingdom of Heaven. If he takes his loss in the right way, then his humiliation will become his salvation. What is the end of the rich man who is rich and nothing else? As he goes to and fro making money he shall perish suddenly like grass dried and scorched under the burning sun and the sirocco of the desert.

Happy and blessed, I repeat, is the man that patiently endures to the end. His joy goes beyond this life. When at last his days of trial are over, and the final verdict of "Well done" has been pronounced by the Judge, he shall gain the victory and the crown—the crown of Life—given to them who love the Lord.

- 13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted
of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil,
14 neither tempteth he any man: but every man is
tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust,
15 and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it

bringeth forth sin : and sin, when it is finished,¹
 16 bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved
 17 brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift²
 is from above, and cometh down from the Father
 of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither
 18 shadow of turning.³ Of his own will begat he us⁴
 with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of
 firstfruits of his creatures.

¹ full-grown, ² boon ³ shadow caused by turning.

⁴ He brought us forth

Yes, trial is manifold. I have spoken of trials from without. Now I go on to speak of trials from within—temptations to sin. They *are* from within, not from God. Do not make the fatal mistake of attributing them to the wrong source. By doing this we make the one God inconsistent with Himself. God cannot Himself be tempted to sin. He is absolutely insusceptible to evil. He is perfectly pure, perfectly holy. Certainly, then, He cannot tempt His children to sin. He may *permit* temptation, but He does not tempt. If He permits it, it is in order that we may be the better and stronger for resisting it, not that we may fall. That is Satan's object. It is the evil desire in a man's own heart that tempts. Desire dangles her bait before a man, and draws him away from the right path. When Desire meets her object, Desire conceives and becomes the mother of a daughter—Sin. Sin in her turn, when she is grown up, brings forth her son—Death.

Now contrast with this what God does for us.

He cannot give evil gifts.¹ All goodly gifts, all perfect boons, come down from heaven, where God is, the Father and Creator² of the sun and the

¹ Compare St. Matt. vii. 11 and St Luke xi. 13.

² All through this passage St James seems to have in his mind the accounts of the Creation found in Genesis i. and ii. I adopt Professor Mason's view (advocated also by Spitta) that the reference is to the *natural* creation, when God gave us life, rather than to the New Birth of the Gospel or to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Both these latter ideas (although they may be illustrated by such passages as St John xvii. 17; 1 St Pet. i. 23; Eph. i. 13) seem to be foreign to the simplicity of St James, and to be inconsistent with the context. What St James here means is that, *by the fact of our creation*, we are God's children, and therefore bound to be like our Father, Who has given us so many good gifts, and among the greatest a life derived from Him and to be lived for Him.

The expression "the word of truth" (more literally 'a word') has been usually interpreted of the preaching of the Gospel (1 St Pet. i. 25; St John vi. 63). Some, following Athanasius, make it refer directly to Christ—"the Word" as St John calls Him. I take it of the Divine Fiat which brought about the creation of man. It is only fair to state that the great majority of commentators take the other view.

There is an interesting passage in Plato (*Timæus*, 29 E) in which the question is asked why the Creator made the universe. The answer is almost in St James's words: 'Because He was Good.'

I do not know whether I may venture to claim Dr Hort as a supporter of the view advocated above, but a passage in his *Judaistic Christianity* seems to indicate something of the kind. He says (p. 151): 'Just as our Lord appealed from the Mosaic legislation to the Divine word spoken from the beginning (St Matt. xix. 8), as the utterance as it were

moon and the stars that are the "sons of God" (Job xxxviii. 7). But, though He is their Father, the heavenly bodies of His creation are unlike Him in this respect. They change and vary their position. As they revolve they are sometimes in shadow. God is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He made the "greater lights and the lesser lights," but He made a creature far higher than these. He made *man* in His image. One of His best gifts to us is the gift of life. He is to us men both Father and Mother. By His free choice, by His deliberate purpose for us, He "brought us forth." And His creative fiat was a true word—the utterance of a true and divine thought. Created in His image, what a destiny is ours! The end and climax of creation in natural order, it is our high glory to be the first-fruits¹ in the spiritual order—the consecrated and consecrating first-fruits of His creation.

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let¹ every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

¹ Ye know this, my beloved brethren. Let

of the Law within and behind the Law, so various sayings of St James, rightly understood (*e.g.* i. 23, iii. 9), carry us back to the primary creation in the Divine image as the true standard of a right life; and thus implicitly lead the way to the restoration of the Divine image which is made possible by the Gospel.²

¹ For the "first-fruits," see Num. xv. 21; Deut. xviii. 3, 4; Rom. xi. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 20; 2 Thess. ii. 13.

for others by which we become like God. And then let us receive with humility that Divine Word which has been implanted¹ in us by God at our creation, by which we may be saved. If we resist God's will, then His Divine purpose for us is thwarted. If we are humble, penitent, ready to bear God's chastenings, then indeed the good seed will grow and flourish and bear fruit.

I have said that we must be ready to listen. But we must not be *mere* listeners. We must be doers. A mere listener is like a man who looks at his face and figure in a mirror, and then goes away and forgets what he looks like. So also we may listen to descriptions of our true selves—of that which God intended us to be when He created us in His image. And soon we may go away and forget it all. Then we are no better than self-deceivers. But we must stoop down and gaze into the picture

¹ This difficult word has been rendered (1) "inborn," its usual meaning, as in Wisdom xii. 10; (2) "implanted," *cf.* St Matt. xiii. 3-23 (Parable of the Sower). On the whole, spite of the use of the word "receive," the former seems to give the sense most suited to the context. St James's thought would appear to be that the Word is like a seed lying in the man's heart, put there by God at his birth in His image. In favourable conditions the seed will grow and bear fruit in life, but it certainly will not do this if the heart is full of impurity and malice. Churchmen cannot fail to think, in this connexion, of the gift of the Holy Spirit at the New Birth of Holy Baptism; but St James seems to have rather in his mind a possession common to all God's creatures than the special gift to Christians.

that God has drawn for us of His perfect law,¹ to obey which is perfect freedom—not imposed as by a taskmaster, but a law to which all that is best in man joyfully responds. But we must do more than gaze on it. We must carry it out practically in our lives. It must be the fixed and guiding principle of our being: and then, indeed, we shall be blessed as we obey it.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and
bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own
27 heart, this man's religion *is* vain. Pure religion
and undefiled before God and the Father is this,
To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,
and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Let us now take some examples of this need for *practical* religion.

A man may appear religious. He may devoutly attend all the ordinances of religion. He may be regular at public worship. Well, but suppose such a man is known to be a man of uncontrolled speech, bitter and hasty in his language—suppose he is one of those hypocrites who are quite unconscious of their hypocrisy²—such a man's "religion" is vain—useless. Let

¹ The thought of Christianity as a Law, although it is most prominent in St James, is found also elsewhere in the New Testament (Rom. iii. 27 ; 1 Cor. ix. 21).

² Rom. ii. 17–24. It is to be noted that it is St James *the Just*—scrupulous in his own religious observances—who warns his readers thus.

him carry his religious observance into practice. Let him be like God, Who is the Father of the fatherless and the Judge and Helper of the widow. Let him help them by practical, active sympathy, and let him strive to keep himself unspotted from the defilements of this naughty world: and then he will learn something of the meaning of true Religion.¹

¹ The three parts of "righteousness" mentioned in the 'Sermon on the Mount' are prayer, almsgiving, and fasting (see St Matt. vi. 1-18). The first of these may perhaps be alluded to here in the word "religious"; while the second and third are treated of on their positive and higher side. The duty of real sympathy with suffering underlies and spiritualises almsgiving, while the end of *fasting* is that we may keep ourselves unspotted from the world. The services and sacrifices of Judaism, where they had not lost their true value and significance, taught the consecration and sacrifice of the life. Thus true worship must result in a consecrated life (see Isa. i. 10-20; Mic. vi.). In this passage St James refers back to verse 21, where he had spoken of laying aside filthiness (*personal* impurity) and malice (sin against others). These must be put off (Eph. iv. 22-24), and purity and active love take their place.

CHAPTER II

IN the second chapter of his Epistle, St James is dealing with two more examples of that inconsistency of life which is at once the enemy of true practical religion, and unworthy of a child of the One God. The first instance is undue respect of persons—undue homage to wealth *as such*. One of God's attributes is that He is no respecter of persons (Acts x. 34). If therefore we are respecters of persons, then we are, so far, unlike Him, and fall grievously short of our true selves. The second example goes deeper. It deals with the inner life of the soul. It is a monstrous inconsistency to profess faith without works. A fruitless faith is as much an anomaly in the Kingdom of Grace as a fruitless tree would be in the Kingdom of Nature (St Luke xiii. 6-9).

In verses 10-13 the author goes back to first principles. The examples of inconsistency he had given (i. 26-ii. 7) are grave offences against the Law. Now the Law of the Kingdom, as fulfilled and interpreted by Christ—the Royal Law¹—is a

¹ Compare the old Latin form of our Second Collect, for Peace, in the Morning Service, "Deus . . . cui servire regnare est."

great *whole* (compare St Matt. v. 17-38). It is one, as God is one. It is the expression of a single, divine Will. Hence, a man who breaks any part of the One and indivisible Law breaks the whole of it. It is like that other expression of the Mind of God, the Church—the Body of Christ—in this at least, that if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that, when St James dwells on the inconsistency of undue respect of persons, he does not mean that Christians are not to shew proper respect to others, but only that the respect shewn must be based on Christian principles, one of which clearly is that wealth and rank *in themselves* make no just claim on our respect. [See on this point 1 St Pet. ii. 16-iii. 7; Col. iii. 11. Church Catechism, ‘My duty towards my neighbour . . . please God to call me.’]

- 1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.¹
- 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in
- 3 also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under
- 4 my footstool: are ye not then partial² in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?³
- 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God

¹ *Some editors render* “Do ye, in accepting persons, hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory? No.”

² divided

³ evil-thinking judges?

chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to
 6 them that love him? But ye have despised the poor.⁴ Do not rich men oppress you, and⁵ draw
 7 you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are
 8 called?⁶ If⁷ ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as
 9 thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the
 10 law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is
 11 guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou
 12 commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye,
 and so do, as they that shall be judged by the
 13 law⁸ of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth⁹ against judgment.

⁴ *insert* man.

⁶ which was called upon you?

⁸ a law

⁵ *insert* themselves

⁷ Howbeit if

⁹ glorieth

Take another instance of failure to carry religion into practice—undue respect of persons. This cannot co-exist with the true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—the Lord of Glory¹—in the light of

¹ Some take the words “of glory” in apposition to the words “Jesus Christ” as meaning “Christ the Glory.” Why, it is asked, cannot our Lord be spoken of as the Glory, if He speak of Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life? Others render the passage “faith in the glory to be revealed,” others again “in the glorious faith.” But on the whole the rendering “the Lord of glory” (=the glorious Lord) seems simplest and best.

Whose presence all earthly distinctions sink into nothing. Suppose two strangers come into your synagogue¹—the one with a fine gold ring and gorgeous raiment, the other a beggar dressed in filthy rags. Suppose you shew undue attention to the man in the fine clothes, and usher him into the very best seat, and then turn to the beggar with a rough ‘Stand you there, or, if you must sit, sit at my feet.’ There it is again—that divided heart. Such an action shews it. By such conduct you manifest yourselves as bad, evil-thinking judges (see chap. iv. 11). Brethren beloved, hearken to this. I have spoken of the glorious privileges of the believing poor (chap. i. 9). They may be poor as the world counts poverty, but they are rich in faith and love—inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. God hath chosen them; you despise one of them. And then, on the other hand, see how the unbelieving rich tyrannise over you!² With their own hands

¹ In the Jew-Christian Church the place for public worship is still called the synagogue. Even the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 25) speaks of the “assembling yourselves together *in synagogue*.” Strangers were doubtless, at first, admitted to the Christian ‘synagogues’ (1 Cor. xiv. 16) as to the Jewish. Afterwards non-Christians were excluded. The rich man and the poor man of the text are clearly casual visitors.

² Josephus (*Antiquities*, xxviii. 8) speaks of the cruelty of the rich Sadducees to the poor. It is to be noticed that, in his language about rich and poor, St James is speaking of *classes* rather than individuals. There is abundant evidence

they hale you before the tribunals. It is *they* who utter blasphemies against that noble Name¹ which was invoked over you at your baptism. I grant you that this respect of yours for the rich *may* proceed from good motives. It may be that you are displaying this respect for the rich because you remember the Master's rule of love,² and because

from the prophets as well as from the New Testament and Josephus, that *as a class* the rich Jews did oppress the poor, and did not realise the responsibilities of their wealth. But there were, of course, exceptions, like Zacchæus and Joseph of Arimathæa, and, doubtless, others also—men prepared to give up all their wealth, if need be, for Christ's sake, and to regard their goods as 'common' for the sake of their brethren. In speaking of the poor, St James clearly refers to the Christian poor, as our Lord does when He says, "Blessed are ye poor"—addressing those who were *disciples*.

¹ The expression "The Name" often occurs in the New Testament to denote the name of Christ (Acts v. 41; Phil. ii. 9, 10). Here the reference seems to be to baptism into the name of Christ (Acts ii. 38). It is to be noticed that the word "Christian" was originally a name given by Gentile (? Roman) opponents (Acts xi. 26). The earliest Christians spoke of each other as Brethren, Saints, Disciples, and the like.

² The primary allusion is of course to Lev. xix. 18. But this law had been reinforced and widened by Christ (St Matt. v. 43-47). The Jewish law was, in theory, scrupulously fair. In the case of a rich and a poor suitor, it ordered that if one sat the other should sit also in court. In Lev. xix. 15 we have a command not to shew partiality *in favour of a poor man*—a warning not perhaps altogether unnecessary.

you wish to shew your forgiveness of your rich oppressors in this way. In that case you are acting rightly. But if, on the other hand, you act as you do from worldly motives, because you wish to curry favour with the rich, then you are sinning. The Law pronounces you guilty. You are transgressors.

‘But,’ you may say, ‘by undue respect of persons we have failed in only *one* point of the Law. It is not as though we had transgressed the whole Law.’ Nay—the Law of God is one as He is One. To break one commandment is to violate the principle of obedience.¹ It is to fail in love—the principle which underlies the whole law of the God of Love. That failure may shew itself in various ways.² We may wrong our neighbour by robbing him of his home happiness, or we may let our hate bear its deadliest fruit of murder. But in all cases the root of the matter is the same. We shall be transgressing the one Law whose motive power is Love. Let all your words and all your acts be guided by the great thought that we Christians shall hereafter be judged by a law of

¹ Some Rabbis said that obedience to certain precepts was as good as obedience to the whole Law; and the question about the relative importance of the commandments (St Matt. xxii. 36) was often discussed. Other Jewish teachers, however, agreed with St James. ‘He who commits one sin procures for[himself] an accuser’ (Taylor, *Pirke Aboth*. iv. 15).

² Compare the Sermon on the Mount, especially St Matt. v. 21–32, and read Gore, *Sermon on the Mount*,

liberty.¹ Such a law frees us from the grievous yoke and burden of slavish obligations.² But, on the other hand, it goes down to the very root and heart of things. It goes beyond the outward acts, and deals with underlying motives. Those who have no pity for the poor, the root of which is Love, shall be judged pitilessly. But the merciful³ man comes forth from the judgment triumphantly acquitted.

- 14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man
say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith
15 save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and
16 destitute of daily food, and one of you say
unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and
filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those
things which are needful to the body; what *doth*
17 *it* profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is
18 dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou
hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith
without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith
19 by my works. Thou believest that there is one
God;¹ thou doest well: the devils also believe,
20 and tremble.² But wilt thou know, O vain man,
21 that faith without works is dead? Was not
Abraham our father justified by works, when he
22 had offered³ Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest

¹ God is one; ² shudder. ³ in that he offered up

¹ The Vulgate here has '*incipientes iudicari*'—a mistranslation, but one containing a profound truth.

² Compare St Paul's teaching in Gal. iv.

³ "Mercy" refers not to the mercy of God, but to the mercy of a good man who displays a godlike quality (St Matt. v. 7).

thou how faith wrought with his works, and by
 23 works was faith made perfect? And the scripture
 was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God,
 and it was imputed unto him for righteousness :
 24 and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then
 how that by works a man is justified, and not by
 25 faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the
 harlot justified by works when she had received ⁴
 the messengers, and had sent *them* out another
 26 way? For as the body without ⁵ the spirit is dead,
 so faith without ⁵ works is dead also.

⁴ in that she received

⁵ apart from (*bis*)

So then the root of all true obedience is Love, bearing fruit in mercy and kindness. 'But,' you may ask, 'what of Faith? Will not Faith as well as Mercy procure us a verdict of not guilty?' That depends on the kind of Faith. What do you mean by Faith?

I. A man may make a great profession of Faith. He may recite his creed at the daily synagogue service,¹ and think that he truly believes it. But the real question is, Does his 'faith' bear fruit in the life? Does it, for instance, lead him to shew practical love to the brethren by acts of mercy in a time of special destitution?² It is

¹ The words of Deut. vi. 4 formed part of the daily service of the synagogue, and were repeated by dying Jews as a sure passport to Paradise. The very fires of Hell, it was said, were cooled for the man who had repeated them with care.

² The reference may be to the famine prophesied by Agabus (Acts xi. 28-30).

useless merely to say words of benediction, however orthodox, over the shivering sufferer destitute of 'daily bread.' It is useless to give good advice to such poor creatures—and to give nothing more. You must shew the fruits of faith. Your faith must be something more than profession. Else it is dead.

II. Suppose someone (for instance a pious Gentile convert) were to say, 'You have an orthodox creed. I do not profess the same formula. But I can point to my active piety as the best evidence of my faith. If you can point to no such evidence, I do not see how anyone can be sure that you have faith at all.' You will find it hard, in answer to such a one, to prove the existence of your faith.

III. You have, you say, the true Faith. You believe that God is one. Very well. That, so far, is good. But you must remember that even the evil spirits go as far as you. Nay, their 'faith' is accompanied by the most profound emotion.¹ They shudder. But that is all. O Fool, realise once more that fruitless faith is a barren, dead faith.

IV. (a) But let us go to the Law and to the Testimony. Let us appeal to Scripture. We learn from Scripture that Abraham was counted righteous on account of his Faith,² and that he was

¹ Compare St Matt. viii. 29 ; St Mark i. 24.

² The words, quoted also by St Paul (Rom. iv. 3 ; Gal. iii.

called God's Friend. But was his Faith mere orthodox profession? Certainly not. When he, in intention, gave up his only son at what he believed to be the call of God, his Faith bore fruit. In his case faith and practice went hand in hand; and thus the result was a perfect, living Faith. This is why Scripture uses such language of him. This is why he was called God's Friend.¹ Thus once more we are brought face to face with the same truth. A man is justified—acquitted—by a fruitful faith: not by a 'faith' without fruit.

IV. (b) Take, lastly, the case of the sinful woman who afterwards became the ancestress of the Lord after the flesh. When Rahab² received Joshua's spies and saved their lives, her faith was

6), do not, in the first instance, refer to the sacrifice of Isaac. But that sacrifice was the crowning fruit of a life of faith. A splendid act of heroism is, as a rule, the outcome and resultant of a long training in self-discipline. So in Abraham's case, the faith that manifested itself early in his life in trust in God bore its full fruit in his readiness to sacrifice his only son.

¹ The *precise* words are not found either in 2 Chron. xx. 7 or in Isa. xli. 8, to which St James seems to refer. But in quoting the Old Testament he sometimes gives the sense rather than the exact words (*cf.* chap. iv. 5).

² Compare Heb. xi. 31 and 1 Clement to the Corinthians i. 12. Both passages are probably suggested by this. The name of Rahab was famous among the Jews. She was said to have been the ancestress of eight prophets. Farrar suggests that she was selected as a typical *Gentile*.

surely practical. Once more I repeat it. As a body without the spirit that vivifies it is a corpse, so profession without the inspiring love which shews itself in practice is dead.¹

¹ Compare 2 Tim. iii. 5 ; Tit. i. 16.

CHAPTER III

THE main subject of this chapter is one on which St James had already touched—sins of speech. Here, however, he begins by a special reference to the position of a Rabbi or Teacher. It must be remembered that, in times when books in the modern sense were unknown, and MS. rolls valuable and the possession of only a few, oral teaching was of the utmost importance.¹ Thus the position of a 'teacher,' speaking with authority, whose statements could not easily be checked by his hearers, was one of great influence and great responsibility. It is clear from the Gospels that too many of the Jewish teachers misused their power, and failed to realise their responsibility. In the Church also, especially perhaps in the Church of Jerusalem, there were many aspirants to the office of Teacher; some of them actuated by worldly and unworthy motives.

(Compare Eccclus. xxviii. 15–26; St Matt. xii. 37, xxiii. 7; 1 Cor. xii. 28, xiv. 26–40; Eph. iv.

¹ There were, of course, many advantages in oral teaching. Plato (*Phædrus*, 277) expresses his preference for it. It was, he says, superior to books, because the oral teacher could be *questioned*. (Cf. St Luke ii. 46.)

11; Rom. ii. 19, 20; 2 Tim. iv. 3. Teachers seem to have been a recognised order in the primitive Church. In the early Jew-Christian tract the 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,' teachers are joined with prophets, xiii. 2, xv. 1, 2.)

In the latter part of the chapter St James contrasts the true and the false wisdom, laying special stress on the *Christian* virtue of meekness, of which both Greeks and Jews thought but poorly.

1 My brethren, be not many masters,¹ knowing that
 2 we shall receive the greater condemnation.² For
 in many things we offend all.³ If any man offend
 not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able
 3 also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we⁴ put
 bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey
 4 us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold
 also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and
are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned
 about with a very small helm, whithersoever the
 5 governor listeth.⁵ Even so the tongue is a little
 member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how
 6 great a matter a little fire kindleth!⁶ And the
 tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the
 tongue among our members, that it defileth the
 whole body, and setteth on fire the course of
 7 nature;⁷ and it is set on fire of hell. For every
 kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and
 of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed
 8 of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame;

¹ teachers, ² receive heavier judgment. ³ we all err.

⁴ If we (reading *ἐν δέ* with the best MSS.)

⁵ the impulse of the steersman willeth.

⁶ how great a wood is kindled by how small a fire!

⁷ And the tongue is a fire: the tongue maketh itself [like]
 the wicked world among our members, and it defileth the
 whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature;

9 *it is* an unruly evil,⁸ full of deadly poison. There-
with bless we God, even the Father ; and there-
with curse we men, which are made after the
10 similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these
11 things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?
12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.⁹

⁸ a restless evil,

⁹ neither can salt water yield sweet water.

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers. The position of a teacher is a terribly responsible one. We teachers—I include myself—shall be judged more severely than others, inasmuch as our opportunities are great and our responsibilities heavy. For indeed we *all* frequently err. There is no such thing as human infallibility. And what is it which is most likely to cause us to err? Is it not *speech* which we teachers have to use so much? But this point—the danger of speech—is of very wide application. It is a danger which is universal. The great test which we may apply to a man to see whether he has attained to the fulness of moral and spiritual growth is this: Has he learnt to control his tongue? If he has, then he is full-grown. Control of the tongue carries with it the possibility of complete self-control.

Let me illustrate this point. If we put bits in the mouths of horses that they may obey us, then

we are in a position to control their whole bodies. Again, the ships—though they are so much bigger than horses, though they are lifeless and cannot be taught to obey, though they are tossed to and fro by contrary winds—can yet be turned about at the will of the steersman. So also if a man has learnt to control his tongue, he has learnt to control an insignificant member indeed, but one with enormous possibilities for good and for evil. Yes, for evil also. It is like the little spark which may set on fire a vast forest. It is indeed a fire. It also resembles (to compare small things with great) the wicked world. Just as the wicked world is a centre of defilement, leavening everything with the leaven of wickedness: so is the tongue. It contains in itself the elements and potentialities of all wickedness. It communicates sins to other parts of the body. And thus it defiles the whole body. But it goes further than this. It sets on fire the whole sphere of life with a fire that has its origin in Hell.¹

¹ This passage is one of well-known difficulty, and many interpretations have been given of the two expressions translated in the Authorised Version "world of iniquity" and "course of nature." We must, in any case, put a stop after the word "fire" at the beginning of verse 6, and remove the word "so," which occurs in none of the best MSS. Some have suggested that the word rendered "world" should be translated 'ornament,' because the tongue can make sin appear delightful, and so can be said to 'adorn' sin. But this translation (1) does not suit the context, (2) is contrary to the manner of St James, who uses the word con-

Now everything else can be tamed. Animals, birds, reptiles, sea-creatures—all these are capable of being subdued and kept under control by human agency. But the tongue can be tamed by no *man*, without the grace of God.¹ It is a restless evil—never still, always breaking away from control and restraint—full of deadly poison. And further, it brings about that *inconsistency* of which I have before spoken, which is so unchristian and unlike God. With our tongues we can pray and praise God. With these same tongues we can curse our brother-men, made, like ourselves, in His image. Thus from the same mouth flow blessing and cursing. Such a condition of things is a monstrous anomaly, brothers beloved in the Master. Look around you on those natural objects with which you are so familiar. Do you ever see a fountain which, from the same orifice, pours forth sweet and brackish water? Do you ever see olives on a fig tree? Do you ever see figs on a vine? Why, a tree does not bear even two different kinds of *good* fruit. And certainly the bitter Dead Sea² of a

sistently to denote *the world* in its bad sense (*cf.* i. 27). The other expression has been rendered (1) the circuit of creation (which God made very good), (2) the rolling wheel of life, (3) the sphere of life : which seems best and simplest. See Additional Note at end of this section, p. 69.

¹ St Matt. xix. 26. Augustine, *de Nat. et Grat.* xv., 'ut, cum domatur, Dei misericordia, Dei adjutorio, Dei gratia, fieri fateamur.'

² The word translated "salt" is used of the Dead Sea

cursing tongue cannot produce the sweet water of acceptable praise to God.

(For this whole section our Lord's emphatic and solemn words recorded in St Mark vii. 15-23 may be compared. The idea common to both is that evil thoughts and evil words pollute the man through and through.)

13 Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge
among you? let him shew out of a good conversa-
14 tion¹ his works with meekness of wisdom. But if
ye have bitter envying and strife² in your hearts,
15 glory not, and lie not against the truth. This
wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly,
16 sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife *is*,
17 there *is* confusion and every evil work.³ But the
wisdom that is from above is first pure, then
peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of
mercy and good fruits, without partiality,⁴ and
18 without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness
is sown in peace of them that make peace.

¹ conduct

² rivalry

³ every vile deed.

⁴ without vacillation,

You aspire to be teachers. But what is the essential qualification for a teacher? Wisdom. But how are we to know a truly wise and understanding¹ man? We are to know him in the same

wherever else it occurs in the Bible (Num. xxxiv. 12; Deut. iii. 17).

¹ For the words compare Job xxviii. 12. Wisdom is defined by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* i. 5) as 'the understanding of things divine and human, and their causes.' See also St Matt. xiii. 54; Rev. v. 12, etc. It is an *ethical*

way as we know the truly "religious" man, the true keeper of the law, the true believer—by his life and conduct. The heavenly wisdom (1) is fruitful in good deeds, and (2) it inspires its possessors with humility and a wise gentleness.¹ It is a direct contrast to the false wisdom. If you nourish in your hearts bitter jealousy of one another and party-spirit, do not boast of your wisdom ; for your boast will then be nothing but a lie. For wisdom of this sort does not come down from heaven. It is of the earth, earthy ; it is carnal,² the slave of animal passions ; demon-like in its selfishness and pride and ambition. Where jealousy and party-spirit are, there you will find unsettlement and everything that is worthless. Now let us contrast with this the true heavenly wisdom. This wisdom is quiet and unostentatious—shewing itself in the life rather than in words.

First of all, in its inward essence, it is pure, wholly consecrated to God, free from worldly motives. Then this inward and spiritual grace has its outward manifestation in the life. It loves peace and the things which make for peace. It is

quality. The other word (used here only in the New Testament) seems to denote special practical knowledge.

¹ The same word occurs in 1 St Pet. iii. 15 ; Gal. vi. 1.

² See for this word 1 Cor. ii. 14 ; St Jude 19. In another passage (1 Cor. xv. 44) St Paul contrasts the "natural" body—using the same word which St James uses here—with "spiritual" body.

reasonable and considerate for others. It is not unduly obstinate in maintaining its own opinion, but ready to welcome truth from whatever quarter it may come. But, after all, it shews itself principally, as I said, in the life. It is eager to shew pity to others. It is fruitful in good works—not holding itself aloof from human sorrow and human life in a sort of calm superiority, but eager to display practical sympathy with those who are brothers and sisters in Christ. It is not passive merely. It is active. And then it is wholehearted, steadfast, unwavering, unhesitating. It goes straight forward with single aim; and therefore it is perfectly sincere—without pretence of any kind. Such a wisdom makes for peace, not for strife. Such wise men are peacemakers—men who sow good seed in peace. In God's time the good seed will grow up and bear a goodly harvest.

For this magnificent analysis of the true wisdom which is the gift of God we may compare Prov. ii. 3-6; Eccclus. xxiv.; Wisdom of Solomon vii. 22-28. Dr Plummer points out that in the elaborate descriptions of the Apocryphal books there is no mention of the peaceable and merciful character of wisdom. There is indeed a hint of it in Prov. iii. 17, but only a hint. So that St James, here as elsewhere, makes a distinctively *Christian* addition to the older teaching. 'It was left for the Gospel to teach, both by the example of

Christ and by the words of His Apostles, how inevitably the Divine wisdom produces, in those who possess it, gentleness, self-repression, and peace.' Points like these, which may easily escape the hasty reader, make us feel how essentially Christian a writer St James was, and convince us that his Epistle is through and through a Christian document—not a Jewish document with one or two Christian additions.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON VERSES 3-6

The difficulties of this passage are due largely to St James's concentration of style, and to his habit of heaping up illustration on illustration which he may have acquired from his study of Jewish literature (compare Wisdom v. 10-12). Perhaps his epigrammatic obscurity is intentional and deliberate. He wishes to make his readers reflect, and for that purpose he uses phrases which will be remembered and fructify in the minds of the more thoughtful. We may see in this something resembling our Lord's use of nature-parables during the earlier part of His ministry (St Mark iv. 10-12).

Here he is talking of the tongue, and in various forcible ways he brings out the immense power for good and for evil which the tongue has. First comes the metaphor, suggested by the word "bridle" in verse 2, of the horse and his rider.

The reading and rendering of the first word or words are doubtful. Westcott and Hort read "Now if," and this is the rendering of the Revised Version. It is, however, by no means certain that this is not one of the rare cases in which the inferior manuscripts have preserved the true reading. Such cases occur, *e.g.*, in Ecclesiasticus xxxi. 21 (where the Authorised Version is almost certainly correct in following the inferior texts) and xliii. 23, where even the Revisers reject the reading of the best manuscripts. St Mark vi. 22 is another instance. So also in the case before us, the reading adopted by the Authorised Version makes better sense and is more suitable to St James's style. "*Behold*, we control horses, huge as they are, with a small bit managed by a skilful rider." Then follows a still more striking metaphor. It is no doubt wonderful that a big, strong horse should be controlled by a small bit, but, after all, a horse is intelligent. His will may co-operate with the will of the rider. He may be taught to obey. But a ship is at once bigger and wanting in the intelligence of the horse. It is tossed to and fro at the mercy of the winds and waves. But yet this huge mass is controlled and guided by the helm in the hands of the helmsman. And at this point St James abruptly changes the current of his thoughts. Instead of completing the idea suggested by his metaphors, and saying, 'so also he who can control his tongue can con-

trol his whole body,' he seems to be overwhelmed with the thought of the mischief a tongue can do, and ends his sentence by an unexpected turn, "So the tongue is a little member, and *boasts great things*." Once more he piles metaphor on metaphor. The tongue is like a spark that sets a great forest a-fire. It is itself a fire. It is a "world of iniquity." The last metaphor has given rise to much discussion, but the idea seems to be, that while the other members can sin in only a limited way, the tongue has in it infinite possibilities of sin—a whole cycle of iniquities.¹ It is a centre of corruption, defiling the whole body—a bad leaven, leavening the whole lump. In verse 6 there is a remarkable word in the Greek, inadequately

¹ 'There is no divine law which the tongue cannot break. It may be guilty of irreverence to God and of profanity. It may be insolent to parents; it may be arrogant to all men. Not by the hand only can a man steal—he can rob his neighbour by lying words. Not by the hand only can he do violence to other men—by his tongue he can inflict the most cruel and intolerable suffering. His tongue may be the instrument of his hatred and of his lust. There is no sinful passion which may not find expression in speech. There is no ambition and selfish motive which may not achieve its ends by speech. And as in an earlier passage in this Epistle St James tells us that true religion will lead a man to keep himself unspotted from the great world outside, which is likely to defile him, he here implies that true religion will lead a man to avoid defilement from the world of iniquity which he may find in his own speech.'—R. W. Dale, *Epistle of James*, pp. 94, 95.

translated "is" even in the Revised Version. In chapter iv. 4, where it occurs again, the Revisers render "maketh himself." That is the idea here. The tongue was created by God good. St James's view of the creation always insists upon the point that man was created in God's image. But the tongue may *become* bad. Like the man himself, it may become corrupted. And then the fall of it is great. In its fall it is not alone. It defiles the whole nature of the man—the whole circuit of his being.

When he has reached this point, St James, as his manner is, goes back to the thought with which he started. The tongue, he had said, is a fire. He now points out the source and origin of its baleful flame. It is derived from Hell—the "Gehenna of Fire."¹

¹ The number of the metaphors employed by St James is remarkable, considering the shortness of his Epistle. Some of these seem to be suggested by our Lord's teaching (St Matt. vi. 19; St John iv. 10-14), but others are employed in a way peculiar to St James.

CHAPTER IV. 1-12

THE next portion of the Epistle, from chapter iv. 1 to chapter v. 11, consists of two passages of stern denunciation (iv. 1-4, iv. 13-v. 6), each followed by a passage of mingled consolation and gentler rebuke. The fiercer invectives, which recall the language of the old prophets, may be addressed in the first instance to non-Christian Jews. They do not contain the essentially Christian word 'brethren,' as chapters iv. 11 and v. 7 do, and the severe attack on money-greed and riches seems out of place as addressed to a *poor* Church like that of Jerusalem. But at the same time we must not limit these rebukes as though they had no application even to Jewish Christians. Some of the Churches of the Dispersion might have contained a considerable proportion of wealthy men: nor, again, is covetousness a sin confined to the rich.

- 1 From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts¹
- 2 that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because
- 3 ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye

¹ pleasures

- ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.
- 4 Ye adulterers and ² adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world
- 5 is ³ the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in
- 6 us lusteth to envy? ⁴ But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, ⁵ God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

² *omit* adulterers and ³ maketh himself

⁴ He longeth eagerly for the spirit that He planted in us?

⁵ The scripture saith,

I have warned you against the ambition which desires to teach without possessing the necessary qualification—the true wisdom. Now I warn you against another sin which is equally fatal to the Christian life—the pursuit of *pleasure* as the great end of life. What is the origin of all your fighting? What is the origin of all your contention and strife? It is the same always. It arises from a kind of dualism in the man himself—a divided heart. There, in the man, are the desires like a hostile force encamped, against which we have ever to be on our guard. You long to obtain something: but you cannot get it. You do not stop at murder: but even so your covetous desires go on.¹ They grow by what they feed on. And

¹ The words rendered “kill” and “desire to have” have been variously translated. Some early commentators render the first word “hate” (*cf.* St Matt. v. 22), others “commit *moral* suicide,” others again combine the two words, rendering “are murderously envious”; others translate the second word

still you have not got your desire. And then comes the further stage—the wholesale murder of unjust war. ‘You have not got your desire’—and why? Because you have tried to get it in an utterly wrong and godless way—by fighting for it. You should have *prayed* for it, as I have said before. ‘But,’ you say, ‘I have prayed, and yet I have not obtained my heart’s desire.’ Of course not; because you have asked amiss—from an altogether wrong motive. You prayed, not for others, not even for your own highest good—you did not seek first the Kingdom of God—but you prayed for the satisfaction of that which is lowest and basest in your nature. Unfaithful souls,¹ you

“are assassins like the Zealots.” All these seem too fanciful for St James. The idea of the passage is, Even a murder, like the murder of Naboth, does not slay evil desire. That goes on and increases. If by murder the man gets one object of his desire, he will be sure to want another. The restless craving will not be satisfied. Dean Plumptre points out that in the Jewish society as it existed in St James’s time murder was often the first means by which a man sought to gratify his desires (St Mark xv. 7; Acts xxi. 38, xxiii. 14; Prov. i. 16). Dr Plummer has still another rendering: “ye deprive a man of his living” (and so kill him). He compares Eccus. xxxiv. 21, 22.

¹ For the thought compare St Matt. xii. 39 and many passages in the prophets, as Isa. lvii. 3-9; Jer. iii. 20; Ezek. xvi.; Hos. ii. A similar metaphor (of the marriage between Christ and the Church) is also found in Eph. v. 22 and other passages of the New Testament. Our Lord had said, “Ye cannot serve two masters.” St James,

are trying the impossible plan. You desire to love God and the world together. You cannot do it. Love of the world means enmity to God. If, then, you desire to love the world you at once become God's enemy. God is a jealous God. He longs intensely to have for His possession the whole of that spirit which He implanted in us.¹ It *is* His. We ought to render it back to Him. "God is a jealous God," as saith the Scripture.

using a different metaphor, says, Ye cannot have a divided heart—that loves its true Husband and yet loves its false Lover, the world.

‘God bids us give our heart;
We give the world our beauty and our strength,
And hardly give to Him at length
A little part.’

¹ This is a much disputed passage. In the first place there is no passage in the Old Testament exactly corresponding to this. But that need not disturb us. We have seen that St James not infrequently alludes in general terms to a passage or passages in the Scripture, rather than quotes exactly (*cf.* St Matt. ii. 23; St John vii. 38). The reference here is clearly to the great passage Ex. xx. 5 (*cf.* xxxiv. 14 and Deut. iv. 24). Some take ‘the Spirit’ as nominative, and translate “The (Holy) Spirit which He made to dwell in us yearns for us,” or, taking the inferior reading, “the Spirit which has taken up His abode in us.” But I prefer the rendering given above. There does not seem to be any *specific* reference to the work of the Holy Spirit, though clearly that work is assumed and implied. If the view given in the text is right, we may compare chapter i. 18 (St James often returns to topics mentioned in chapter i.) and Psalm c. 3, R.V.

Yes, but His jealousy is very different from the jealousy of men. If He sees a soul likely to be unfaithful to Him, His jealous love displays itself in further supplies of grace—grace that we may love Him wholly and surrender ourselves completely to Him. While, as Scripture says, He resists those who, in spite of everything, are determined to love the world, and disown their dependence upon Him, yet to the lowly and meek He gives more grace.¹ Again we see His gifts are always good.

- 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the
 8 devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to
 God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your*
 hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye*
 9 double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and
 weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning,
 10 and *your* joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in
 the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.¹
 11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that
 speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his
 brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth
 the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not
 12 a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one law-
 giver, who is able to save and to destroy: who
 art thou that judgest another?

¹ exalt you (*cf.* St Matt. xxiii. 12).

¹ The storm is followed by a calm. The last word of the passage that began so fiercely is one of hope. The concluding sentences remind us of the Magnificat—itself largely based on the Old Testament, of which the Virgin, like her step-son, was a devout student. The idea is found in Prov. iii. 34, quoted also by St Peter (1 St Pet. v. 5).

Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Surrender your will utterly and completely to Him. It is a hard task, but a necessary one. You may have erred and gone astray. In that case your will has been weakened and your whole moral standard lowered by your self-indulgence. But you must play the man. You must fight—not any longer against your fellow-men in strife and bitterness, but against your adversary the devil. Resist him, and he will flee from you as he did from the Master. He can be conquered, for he has been conquered. You must not say that his temptations are *irresistible* any more than you have any right to shift the responsibility for temptation from yourselves to God (i. 13-15). No doubt the devil, working with your evil desires, is strong: but God is stronger. Draw nigh to Him,¹ in prayer, and so in character, and then He will draw nigh to you. Let sinners, like the priests of old, have clean hands before they draw nigh to God. Let those who have halted between two opinions and tried to face both ways—the double-minded (i. 8)—make their

¹ The phrase was originally used of the Mosaic priesthood, and was afterwards applied to Christian worship (Heb. vii. 19). If we draw nigh to God in true prayer, our worship will react on our life, so that we, like Enoch, shall “walk with God.” So Keble sings:

‘ Help us this and every day
To live more nearly as we pray.’

hearts pure. Do not take your sins lightly. Be *wretched*¹ as you think of your transgressions.

Shew the reality of your repentance not only by inward feelings but by outward signs. Shew it by your sad demeanour. Shew it by your tears. Let the frivolous laughter of the old days be turned into mourning, and your false joy (how different from the true! i. 2) into dejection.² And, since the root of all your ambitions and greed is self-will, humble yourselves before God, and then He will exalt you. If you try to exalt *yourselves* you will surely fall. If you humble yourselves He will exalt you.

Self-conceit is at the root of all such sins against God as those of which I have been speaking. It is also at the root of that great sin against our neighbours (which indeed is also a sin against God), against which I have already warned you (i. 26, ii. 12, iii. 1-10)—I mean speaking against our brethren in Christ. When a man speaks against a brother, he is, by implication, condemning the Law of Love as a bad law. He is arrogating to himself the part of a judge who, if he condemns a law as bad, judges it by the standard of some higher law by which he tests it. In the case of the Royal Law of Love, this is insolent presumption. In criticising that Law

¹ Rom. vii. 24 (the same word).

² A very rare word. But the adjective occurs in Wisdom xvii. 4.

you criticise the Divine Lawgiver. There is one only source of all Law—God. It is from Him that all human judges derive their authority. He alone has the right to save and destroy. It is He who will at last right all wrong and rectify all injustices. Let us Christians wait patiently for the verdict of that Great Tribunal. Who are you that presume to judge your neighbour? ¹

¹ Compare Rom. ii. 23, xiv. 4-10; 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5. The special sin St James is condemning is, of course, the habit of forming unfavourable judgments about our brethren—the censorious habit of mind—the seeing of the mote in one's brother's eye.

CHAPTER IV. 13—V. 6

IN the section of fierce denunciation which follows, St James speaks as a Hebrew prophet. In the New Testament the Parable of the Rich Fool comes nearest to it (St Luke xii. 16). Such presumption as that described in the text, and in the Parable, was specially contrary to the whole teaching of Judaism, one of the central thoughts of which was the complete dependence of the chosen people on Jehovah.

13 Go to now, *ye that say*, To-day or to-morrow we
will go into such a city,¹ and continue there a year,
14 and buy and sell, and get gain : whereas ye know
not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what²
is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth
15 for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that
ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live,
16 and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your
17 boastings : ³ all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to
him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to
him it is sin.

1 Go to now, *ye rich men*, weep and howl for your
2 miseries that shall come upon ⁴ *you*. Your riches

¹ into this city,

² of what sort (some remove the stop after 'morrow' and omit the word 'for,' which is not in the best MSS., rendering 'what your life to-morrow will be like').

³ ye exult in your vauntings :

⁴ that are coming upon

- are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.
 3 Your gold and silver is cankered ; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped
 4 treasure together for ⁵ the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth : and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.
 5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton ; ye have nourished your hearts, as ⁶ in a
 6 day of slaughter. Ye have condemned *and* killed the just ; ⁷ *and* he doth not resist you.

⁵ in.⁶ *omit* as.⁷ the Righteous One ;

This spirit of worldliness and want of humility has many forms. I have spoken of the sin of the pursuit of pleasure as an end in itself, and of the insolence which arrogates to itself God's prerogative of judgment. Now we come to another example of the same spirit. Shame on you that make plans for future gain without any reference to God ! You form your schemes for money-getting. 'We will travel to yonder city. We will stay there a year. We will make large sums of money by trading.' To use such language when you do not know what your life will be even to-morrow ! Life—it is like a vapour swept away by the heat of the sun.¹ Instead of such language you ought to say with true humility and humble dependence on God, "If the Lord wills, we shall live, and do this or that." Our life and our actions

¹ Wisdom ii, 4.

are in His hands. But as it is, you exult in your self-confident speeches. You have not even the decency to be ashamed of them. All such presumptuous boasting is wicked. It is as though man and not God were the giver of prosperity. It implies that man is the author of his own success. You cannot, in committing such sins, plead ignorance. Everyone knows how uncertain life is: every Jew knows how absolutely dependent he is on God. Therefore, since you know, your sin is the greater. It is against light and knowledge.¹

From the presumptuous merchant with his love of money-getting I pass on to a worse class still—the unjust capitalist and the rich, grasping landlord. Shame on you! Your day of reckoning is at hand; nay, it is on you. Weep and shriek like terrified women. Your corn is rotten. Your rich clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are rusted. And that rust which is consuming your treasure before your eyes shall be a witness to you that all earthly things perish. Yea, it shall consume you also, body and soul, like the fire of the valley of Hinnom. Your bodies shall perish at last, while even in life covetous desires will eat into your soul, and destroy all its best qualities. And the folly of it! You are heaping up your treasures when the Judge is at the gate and the end is at hand. And the sin of it! You have

¹ St Luke xii. 47 St John xv. 22.

hired poor labourers to reap your broad acres—and have cheated them of their wages. You have turned a deaf ear to their cries for justice. But the Lord of Hosts has heard them. You have lived in selfish luxury. You have squandered your wealth in riotous living. You have fattened yourselves like fed beasts—only, like them, to be slaughtered.¹ And then—climax of your ill deeds—you condemned and slew the Righteous One. He doth not resist you.²

¹ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, v. 10. 2 (quoted by Plummer), tells us how these words were fulfilled in the siege of Jerusalem, when the richer Jews were slain by the Zealots. It will be remembered that many Jews of the Dispersion, who had come up for the Feast, were shut in the besieged city.

² It is impossible to imagine that in this passage there is *no* reference to the condemnation of our Lord. (For the language we may compare Acts iii. 14, 15, vii. 52.) But we must not limit the reference. St James is no doubt thinking of many acts of injustice, when righteous men, who made it a principle of their life not to resist evil, were slain (*cf.* St Matt. xxiii. 35). Of this class our Lord was the highest representative. See also Wisdom ii. 12–16, 20.

CHAPTER V. 7-END

7 Be patient¹ therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience¹ for it, until he receive the early and latter
8 rain. Be ye also patient; ¹stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.
9 Grudge not² one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth
10 before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.
11 Behold, we count them happy which endure.³ Ye have heard of the patience of Job,⁴ and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

¹ long-suffering (*ter*) ² Complain not

³ we call them blessed that endured.

⁴ the endurance of Job,

ONCE more St James turns to the Christian Jews just as he had done at the end of the previous section, in verse 11 of chapter iv. To them especially the remainder of the Epistle is addressed. This section is linked to the previous one by the word "therefore."¹ There will be a final judgment,

¹ We are reminded of the words of Bernard of Morlaix:

'Hora novissima, tempora pessima sunt, vigilemus.

Ecce minaciter imminet arbiter Ille supremus;

Imminet, imminet, ut mala terminet, aequa coronet;

Recta remuneret, anxia liberet, aethera donet.'

when justice will be done. Therefore, brethren beloved in the Lord, be, like the Master, long-suffering.¹ Wait patiently for the Coming of the Lord.² Look around you. Observe what the husbandman does. He waits patiently and long for the precious produce of the earth. It is worth waiting for. At last he receives it.³ Such must be your attitude. Be patient, strong, and steadfast. The Coming is nigh at hand.

Now there are many ways in which *impatience* may be displayed. I have already spoken of one of them (iv. 11). To *speak* against one another is to usurp the functions of the Great Judge. And so, too, we must be on our guard even against angry *feelings* that do not always find expression in words. You are oppressed, no doubt; but do not

¹ The word here used by St James is not the one we have had in chapter i. 3. It is often used of God (Rom. ii. 4). Below, however, in verse 11, he again uses the word of chapter i. 3. Thus the beginning of the Epistle is linked to the end.

² Here the reference is clearly to Christ. The teaching of the New Testament is that the Father has appointed the Son to judge the world (St Matt. xxiv. 30; St John v. 22-27; Acts x. 42, xvii. 31; Rom. ii. 16).

³ The reference is most likely to the prolonged drought and famine prophesied by Agabus (Acts xi. 28). See also verse 17. The word for "rain" does not occur in the best MSS. Some would supply 'fruit,' but it clearly refers to the "rain" (Deut. xi. 14; Jer. v. 24; Joel ii. 23; Zech. x. 1). St. James frequently draws his illustrations from the natural phenomena of Palestine.

let your irritation and soreness at outside oppression vent itself in grumbling and impatience towards one another. The Judge is standing before the door. And therefore we have no need to murmur, since He will set all things right. And what if He comes and finds you murmuring?

Do you need examples of the right way in which to bear afflictions? Do you desire to learn by such examples how to suffer and be strong? Then go to the Bible and learn a lesson from the heroes of your own history. Take the prophets who spoke to you in the name of the Lord as your examples.

(The question why St James appeals to the saints of the Old Testament as examples of patient endurance rather than to the great Example has frequently been discussed, and has even been used as an argument for Spitta's theory that the main part of the Epistle was written by a pious Jew before Christ. But a little consideration will suggest several answers. (1) St James's deep reverence, which causes him to be sparing in the use of the name of Christ, may have made him hesitate to quote His example. (2) St James is writing to the Jews dispersed throughout the world. Many of them would be ignorant of the details of our Lord's earthly life. We must always bear in mind that our Gospels were not yet written. (3) St James had just spoken of Christ as the Judge.

He could not, without confusion, allude to Him almost in the same breath as an example of patience.)

Behold, we call those who patiently endure Blessed. Think, for instance, of Job, of whom you have heard.¹ He patiently endured till God brought his trials to their appointed end. He never swerved in his allegiance. And so in the end God turned his sorrow into joy, and shewed that He is full of compassion² and mercy. Let us, too, tarry the Lord's leisure. Sorrow patiently endured will at last result in joy.

St James has now finished the main part of his Epistle. He has worked back to his starting-point—the blessedness of patient endurance. The 'postscript' consists of a few last words of warning

¹ It is somewhat remarkable that this is the only reference to the story of Job in the New Testament, although the book is quoted once (1 Cor. iii. 19). Professor Mayor says, 'Job is not an example of what we should call patience, except in his first acceptance of calamity.' But it is to be observed that although Job allowed himself to question the *justice* of God, he never lost his *trust* in Him. The words "you have heard" are strictly used of the oral instruction of the synagogue.

² "Full of compassion"—πολύσπλαγχνος—one of the words which St James seems to have coined. It does not occur, so far as is known, in Greek till he uses it. Hermas borrows it, as he does other words, from St James. The whole passage recalls the opening words of the Epistle.

and encouragement—Judaic in tone indeed, but of universal application.

- 12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath : but let your yea be yea ; and *your*
 13 nay, nay ; lest ye fall into condemnation. Is any among you afflicted ? let him pray. Is any merry ?
 14 let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you ? let him call for the elders of the church ; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name
 15 of the Lord : and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up ; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.
 16 Confess *your* faults ¹ one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.²
 17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain : and it rained not on the earth *by the space of* three
 18 years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth
 19 her fruit. Brethren, if any of you do err from the
 20 truth, and one convert him ; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

¹ Confess therefore your sins

² the supplication of a just man availeth much in its working.

I. *Oaths*.—I have spoken of many sins of speech. But of one I have not yet spoken—swearing. More important is it for Christians, in view of the Lord's Coming, to avoid swearing even than it is for them to avoid impatience and murmuring. Swear not, either by heaven or by earth or by any

other oath. Use the simple Yes or No, and do not support your statements and denials by oaths. Oaths come of sin, and are a consequence of it. If you use oaths you become liable to judgment.¹

II. *Sorrow and Gladness.*—In times of sorrow and in times of gladness alike there is but one Christian way of expressing emotion—worship. If a man is sad, let him pray for wisdom and strength. If a man is of good cheer, let him shew his joy, not by riot and boasting, but by the singing of psalms. Times of excitement, whether joyful or sorrowful, will come in the life of everyone. Nor is this excitement wrong in itself. Only let us direct it into the right channel. Let us make the worship of God the outlet for our emotions, and not vent them in grumbling or swearing or riot, and then all will be well. We shall bind together worship and life.

¹ *i.e.* for breach of the third commandment. On the general question see Excursus V. p. 123. The words “before all things” caused a difficulty even to St Augustine. He says (*Sermons*, 180), ‘We must regard it as a hyperbolical phrase.’ But, as Professor Mayor well points out, we should limit the comparison to what immediately precedes. St James is here comparing oaths only with other expressions of impatience, just as in using the same expression St Peter (1 St Pet. iv. 8) is comparing Love with the virtues of sobriety and watchfulness. Greater than both these, he says, is Love.

III. *Sickness and Confession*.—If a man is sick, let him send for the authorised ministers of Christ—the duly appointed rulers of the Church. Let them pray over¹ him, and anoint him with healing oil in the name of the Lord. If it be His will, the prayer of faith will raise up the sick man and restore him to bodily health. And it will do more than this. It will restore his soul's health. He may have committed grievous sins.² Then, if he truly repents of them, by the intercession of the rulers of the Church they shall be forgiven him. How can the sick man shew his repentance? By confession—confession to God and to His ministers. They will pray for him—and the inter-

¹ This does not imply, as Origen thinks (*Hom.* in Lev. ii. 4), the laying on of hands. The preposition translated 'upon' means simply 'in behalf of.' In the early Church the imposition of hands was sometimes regarded as an *alternative* to the use of oil. Note that here St James uses the usual word for 'Church.' 'Synagogue' is applied to the *place* of worship only.

² It is interesting to study the different words for sin found in the New Testament. The most common is that of the text (*ἁμαρτία*), which implies the idea of *missing the mark*. Another (*παρακοή*), found in Rom. v. 19, 2 Cor. x. 6, Heb. ii. 2, implies *disobedience*. A third (*ἀνομία*) is still stronger, and implies rebellion against God's law (1 St John iii. 4). A fourth (*παράβασις*) implies the transgression of some definitely given commandment (Rom. v. 14). A fifth (*παράπτωμα*) has the idea of a *fall* (Rom. iv. 25). Other words are found in Heb. ix. 7 (*ἄγνοησις* = a sin of ignorance), and Rom. xi. 12, 1 Cor. vi. 7 (*ἡττημα* = a defeat).

cession of a spiritual man has great power with God—and there will follow the healing, of body, if it be God's will, of soul certainly, whatever God's will for the body be.

IV. *Conversion*.—I have said that the intercessions¹ of a man of spiritual mind are of great avail. Let me illustrate this by the case of Elijah.² He was a just man, but yet *a man* like one of us. His supplication was effectual in its working. In order that the guilty nation might be brought to a sense of national sin, he prayed that it might not rain. And in answer to his prayers God withheld rain for the space of three years and a half.³ And so the nation learnt its lesson. The sinful people

¹ The word here used is not the same as the more general word for prayer used in verse 15. It implies a *special* request. For different words for prayer, see 1 Tim. ii. 1.

² See Eccclus. xlviii. 1, 2. Elijah's example is quoted—(1) possibly because of the mention of him by the son of Sira in Ecclesiasticus ; (2) because he was especially a man who had authority to “bind and loose” (St Matt. xvi. 19), to retain and absolve the sins of the nation ; (3) because he was a man of profound spirituality—the Great Prophet, as Moses was the Great Lawgiver ; (4) possibly because of the drought and famine from which the Jews seem to have been suffering at the time when St James wrote ; (5) possibly also, as Mayor suggests, because he raised the son of the widow of Zarephath by his prayers.

³ It was a Jewish tradition that times of exceptional calamity lasted for 42 months or 1260 days. Dan. vii. 25, xii. 7 ; Rev. xi. 2, 3, xii. 6, 14, xiii. 5.

was, for a time at least, converted from its sin. And then Elijah asked God to remove His chastening hand. He prayed again, and the rain came, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

One last word. I have spoken, brethren, of a sinful man and of a sinful nation, and the means by which both man and nation are brought to repentance. It is often some calamity like sickness that makes a man repent, and some national disaster that brings a nation to the feet of God. But, in order that these blessed results may be obtained, God condescends to employ human agency. And what a glorious privilege for men to do God's work on earth! What a high vocation—to bring the wandering sheep back to the fold—to save a soul from death! But the man who takes any part in this great work of saving souls wins a blessing for himself also. The man who saves the souls of others from death may win forgiveness for his own sins as well.¹

¹ The last clause is difficult. It occurs also in St Peter (1 St Pet. iv. 8), "Love covereth a multitude of sins" (*cf.* St Luke vii. 47), and has sometimes been regarded as one of the unrecorded sayings of our Lord. Whether that be so or not, the source of it seems to be the Hebrew of Prov. x. 12. Compare also Ecclus. iii. 3, 28, v. 14; Dan. iv. 24; Tobit iv. 10, xii. 9. These passages seem to shew that the Jews of the days after the Exile held that good deeds did blot out the sins of the doer of them. This view is also found in the Jewish-Christian tract the 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles'

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON VERSE 13

In the *Poetics* Aristotle tells us that the performance of a Tragedy brings about 'the purification of certain emotions.' Whatever truth there may be in that opinion, it is certain that the worship of

(iv. 6), where almsgiving is spoken of as efficacious for the remission of sins. It may therefore be that St James in this passage is referring to, and spiritualising, this Jewish view, as indeed Tertullian (*Scorp.* 6, quoted by Lightfoot) and Origen (*Hom.* in Lev. ii. 4, quoted by Mayor) consider that he does. It is further pointed out that the opposite view—that both clauses refer to the converted sinner only—makes the second clause a mere repetition of the first. Dr. Plummer, however,* strongly argues for limiting the reference to the converted sinner. He says that we do not find in Scripture any such doctrine as that a man may cover his own sins by inducing another sinner to repent, and further that no one would, normally at least, undertake the conversion of another while his own conscience was burdened with a multitude of sins. These are strong points. It is clear that St James has in his mind righteous men—men of deep spirituality—as doing the work of conversion. And indeed this is an obvious necessity. No one can hope to bring others to Christ unless he has himself known Him. But, on the other hand, we must not lose sight of St James's words, "In many things we *all* offend," or of St Paul's words in 1 Tim. i. 12-15 (*cf.* Ps. xl. 9-12). The more a man knows of Christ and his own heart the more he will realise his own sinfulness, and his need of the Divine forgiveness.

On the whole, it does not seem that we must exclude *all*

* *Epistle of St James in Expositor's Bible*, p. 352.

God does effect the purification of the emotions in a very real sense. St James's teaching, then, that emotion finds its best outlet in worship is most valuable and necessary. In this connexion it may be helpful to call attention to a sermon on this text by John Henry Newman.¹ In it he points out, with striking power, the influence of religious worship, and specially the services of the Church reference to the converter in these last words of the Epistle, even if we refer them in the first instance to the converted. As Dean Farrar wisely and soberly says: 'May not the thought be at least involved that, in covering the sins of another, a man would also be helping to cover his own—that he who waters others shall be watered also himself?' Of course St James does not mean that a man should undertake such work as he is speaking of in order to obtain forgiveness of his own sins. Such an idea would be un-Christian. The work is to be undertaken from the only true motive—love to God and man (1 Cor. xiii. 1-3). But then such a work, so undertaken, will bring with it its own exceeding great reward. It must bring the missionary nearer to God. And the nearer a man is brought to God the more grace he wins for new victories over sin in his own heart as in the hearts of others, till at last the conflict is over, and he wins the crown of Life, and that other crown awarded to those who turn many to righteousness,* who "shall shine as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

¹ *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii.

* 'Whosoever makes the many righteous, sin prevails not over him; and whosoever makes the many to sin, they grant him not the faculty to repent.

'Moses was righteous, and made the many righteous, and the righteousness of the many was laid upon him.'

Pirke Aboth. (ed. Taylor), v. 26, 27.

of England, in purifying and spiritualising emotion. He concludes thus : 'Is anyone then desirous of gaining comfort to his soul, of bringing Christ's presence home to his very heart, and of doing the highest and most glorious thing for the whole world? Let him praise God ; let holy David's Psalter be as familiar words in his mouth, ever repeated, yet ever new and ever sacred. Let him pray ; especially let him intercede. Doubt not the power of faith and prayer to effect all things with God. . . . Go not astray to find out new modes of serving God and benefiting man. I shew you a more excellent way. Come to our Services ; come to our Litanies ; throw yourself out of your own selfish heart, pour yourself out upon the thought of sin and sinners, upon the contemplation of God's throne, of Jesus the Mediator between God and man, and of that glorious Church to which the dispensation of His merits is committed.'

EXCURSUSES

EXCURSUS I

ST JAMES AND ST PAUL ON FAITH AND WORKS

IN discussing this question two points confront us :—(1) *Was either writer acquainted with the work of the other?* and (2) the far more important one, *Is there any contradiction between the teaching of the two?*

Now it must be frankly admitted that, at first sight, it is startling to find St James and St Paul discussing what appears to be the same problem, using the same illustration, quoting the same passage from the Old Testament (Gen. xv. 6), and yet coming to conclusions which seem contradictory. On the surface, it looks as though the answers to both the above questions must be affirmative.

But further examination modifies our first view. In the first place, although it is on the whole probable that one of the two writers had read the work of the other, it cannot be regarded as proved ; while, even if we admit this, it is by no means certain that St James was acquainted with any Epistle of St Paul when he wrote his letter. For it must be borne in mind that, as Dr Lightfoot points out, the problem of Abraham's Faith was one

frequently discussed in the schools of the Rabbis.¹ Both St James and St Paul must have been well aware of this, and may have used Abraham's faith as an illustration of their argument quite independently of each other. And further, even if we allow that one of the two was acquainted with the work of the other, it is at least as likely that St Paul had read St James as that St James had read St Paul. Professor Mayor points out that, in several passages in the Epistle to the Romans, St Paul appears to shew acquaintance with the Epistle of St James. In Rom. iv. 1-5, 16-22, 'St Paul betrays a consciousness that Abraham had been cited as an example of "works."' In Rom. v. 3-5 he 'seems to be working up a hint received from James.' In Rom. viii. 21-23, xi. 16, St Paul 'works up the hint of St James into a far more elaborate conception.' In Rom. xiv. 4 (compare with St Jas. iv. 11) the 'simpler form' of St James 'seems to be the older.' Further, Professor Mayor thinks that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews,² feeling that confusion had arisen from the fact that St James uses the word "faith" without saying precisely what he means by it,

¹ *Epistle to the Galatians*, 6th edition, p. 164. Compare 1 Macc. ii. 52.

² The vexed question of the date and authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews need not be discussed here. Suffice it to say (1) that it was addressed to a *Jewish* community, probably to the Church of Jerusalem, (2) that it was written before the siege of Jerusalem.

begins his eleventh chapter by defining Faith. If we accept Professor Mayor's arguments, we are led to the conclusion, on other grounds the more probable, that St James wrote before St Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

But, even if we hold with Professor Hort and others that the Epistle to the Romans is earlier than the Epistle of St James, we cannot with safety say anything more than that, in this case, St James may be protesting against false and dangerous perversions of St Paul's teaching, just as St Paul protests in Gal. ii. 12 against the views of those who "came from James" and misrepresented his teaching.

However this may be, the main problem of an apparent contradiction between St James and St Paul still confronts us. It may help to solve it if we bear in mind the following points:—

I. The character and spiritual history of the two men were very different. Both seem to have been converted by an appearance of the Risen Lord, but here the resemblance ends. To St James, in his quiet orderly life at Jerusalem, there is no break in the continuity between the Law and the Gospel. The one was the fulfilment of the other. St Paul, in the great crisis of his conversion, had been led to see everything in a new light. The process by which Christianity was added to his belief in the one God was 'nothing less than a convulsion of his whole nature—like the stream of molten lava

pouring down the volcano's side. Ask such a one whether his faith is not to be proved by action, and the question will seem to him trivial and superfluous. Of course action will correspond with faith.'¹

II. St James (in chapter ii.) and St Paul use the word "faith" in different senses. It has been pointed out that in the first chapter of his Epistle St James employs the word almost if not quite in its Pauline sense. But here he does not. As a Hebrew-speaking Jew, he was accustomed to use the same word with different meanings.² The Hebrew vocabulary was a limited one, and in that language the same words not uncommonly had various senses. So here the word Faith means little more than the acceptance of certain articles of belief—especially the great article of the Jewish Creed (called the Shema after its first word), "Hear, O Israel; the Lord thy God is one Lord." But if this "faith" bore no fruit in life, then it was dead.³

¹ Sanday, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 103 (*International Critical Commentary*).

² It has been thought by some that the word "justify" is used in different senses by the two writers. But the word always seems to have the meaning 'pronounce righteous,' 'acquit' (see St Luke xviii. 14; I Cor. iv. 4; St Matt. xi. 19).

³ It need scarcely be pointed out how closely this corresponds with our Lord's own words afterwards incorporated in the Gospels. By parable (St Luke xiii. 6), by miracle (St Matt. xxi. 19), and by precept (St Matt. vii. 21), our

St Paul uses the word in several senses—though never in St James's sense—but most commonly with the meaning 'a strong and confident acceptance, a firm planting of the character upon the service of Christ.'¹

III. St James and St Paul also use the word 'works' in different senses. St Paul means by it 'observance of the Levitical and Ceremonial Law, or at the highest, "deeds of the Law" untouched by emotion, not springing from Love.'² St James means by it those deeds which are the necessary fruits of a living faith.

IV. St James and St Paul refer to different incidents in the life of Abraham, as has been pointed out in the explanation of chapter ii. 14-26.

Thus it will be seen that the apparent contradiction between the two writers is due largely to their use of the same words in different senses. That it is apparent only can be shewn by the study of St Paul's writings as a whole. Notice especially passages like 2 Cor. ix. 8; Eph. ii. 10; 2 Thess. ii. 17, and the practical section found at the conclusion of almost every Epistle. In the last letters he ever wrote, just before his martyrdom, he dwells with

Lord emphasises the need of practice and the uselessness of mere profession.

¹ Sanday, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 33, where he discusses the various meanings of the words in various writers.

² Farrar, *Early Days of Christianity*, ii. 79, where there is an excellent discussion of the subject.

special emphasis on the necessity of good works. Perhaps his experience of life had brought home to him the dangers of antinomianism. Passages like 1 Tim. ii. 10, v. 10, vi. 18; 2 Tim. iii. 17; Tit. ii. 7-14, iii. 8, are in complete accord with St James's teaching. 'The difference between them does not relate to the substance of Christian truth. It was merely a difference in their method of stating it.'¹ The differences are verbal: the resemblances are real. No doubt each of the two men was influenced in the expression of truth by the circumstances in which he wrote, his surroundings, and his mental and spiritual attainments. We may go so far as to say that St Paul had deeper insight and a wider outlook on Truth. But we may well thank God, Who has given to His Church sober, practical teachers like St James, as well as spiritual geniuses like St Paul. 'In fact, St James's Epistle is peculiarly the Epistle which should help us in these days. . . . It is a time of much correctness of creed and lip-faith, and therefore a time for reflecting on the futility of such faith without works.'² St

¹ R. W. Dale, *Epistle of James*, p. 75. I am glad to find that I have the support of so great a man in holding that the Epistle of St James was written before those of St Paul. 'There are, I think' (he says), 'decisive reasons for believing that James wrote first; and, in that case, it is probable that the passages in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians were intended by Paul to prevent a mischievous use of this passage in the Epistle of James.'

² *The Epistle of St James, with Notes*, by James Adderley.

James is attacking those who 'rested upon a formula,' with whom 'the acceptance of a Creed was everything, the belief in a Person nothing.' Who shall say that such Pharisaism is dead to-day?

EXCURSUS II

ON THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS WHICH INFLUENCED ST JAMES

IT is certain that St James knew and valued not only the Canonical Books of the Old Testament, but some of those which we call Apocryphal. He does not indeed quote them. No book of the Apocrypha is quoted in the New Testament.¹ But his allusions to them are so numerous that we cannot doubt his acquaintance with them. The passages which have the closest resemblance to parts of our Epistle are found almost entirely in two Apocryphal books—The Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus. The following list of such passages, taken chiefly from Dr Plummer's valuable chapter (vi.) in his edition of *St James*, gives a good idea of the large debt of St James to these two 'Wisdom' books:—Wisdom

¹ The position of the Church of England in regard to the Apocryphal writings is clearly stated in her sixth article. In support of her view she quotes St Jerome. The Church of Rome, in spite of the teaching of St Jerome, teaches that all the books contained in the Vulgate are Canonical. ('Decrees of the Council of Trent,' Sess. iv., *decret. de Canon. Scriptur.*)

ii. 8, 10, 12, 19, 20; iv. 2; v. 7, 8-14; vi. 6; vii. 17-20: Ecclesiasticus i. 11, 16, 18, 23, 26, 28, 30; ii. 1-5, 12; iii. 18; v. 11; vi. 37; vii. 10; xii. 10, 11; xiii. 19; xiv. 23; xv. 11, 12; xx. 15; xxi. 23; xxix. 10; xxxiii. 2. The resemblances in thought and language between most if not all of these passages and the corresponding ones in our Epistle are so close as to make it practically certain that St James had them in his mind. And, since these books seem to have been well known to the Jews of the Dispersion, it is not unnatural or improbable that he should allude to them.

The 'Wisdom of Solomon'¹ has been described as the most beautiful and important production of Alexandrian Judaism. It was written in Egypt by one who was acquainted with Greek thought, but was nevertheless a strict Jew. Who he was or where he lived we cannot say. Some assign the middle of the second century B.C. as the probable date of the book. Some consider that it is an even earlier work. Others, again, see in it the production of a devout and philosophical Jew writing about the time of the Crucifixion. Others go a step further, and declare the author to have been Apollos before his conversion, or Philo. It

¹ It is of course unnecessary to remark that the title 'of Solomon' was not intended to deceive, or that, in fact, it did not deceive anyone. It was not unusual for Jews to give to their writings the names of the great ones of their past history.

can at any rate be affirmed with tolerable certainty that, like St James, the author of the 'Wisdom of Solomon' wishes to console his fellow-countrymen during a time of trial and persecution. Another point which he has in common with St James is the stress he lays on the love of God, and on love as the great law of creation. His beautiful picture of the Righteous Sufferer in chapter ii., and his personification of Wisdom in chapter vii., prepare the way for the Christian conception of the Christ. He teaches a doctrine of immortality, though not the great Christian truth of the Resurrection of the Body.

But, interesting as the 'Wisdom of Solomon' is to the student of St James's Epistle, even greater interest attaches to the book called Ecclesiasticus, or, more correctly, 'The Wisdom of the Son of Sira.' We may not feel quite sure of St James's acquaintance with the 'Wisdom of Solomon.' There can be no reasonable doubt of his knowledge of the 'Wisdom of Ben Sira.' The preface to the book, as we have it in our Apocrypha, tells us that it is a translation into Greek made by the grandson of Ben Sira from an original in Hebrew. This grandson says that his grandfather had made a profound study of the Old Testament, and, as a result, 'was drawn on also himself to write somewhat pertaining to instruction and wisdom.' Within the last few years Dr Schechter and other scholars have discovered large fragments, amount-

ing together to about two-thirds, of the original Hebrew.¹ As to the date of the work, we are in a position to say that it was somewhere about 190 B.C.—a little before the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. The translator tells us in his preface that he made his translation in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Ptolemy Euergetes (*i.e.* about B.C. 132). Although the Greek Version was made in Egypt, the writer was almost certainly a Palestinian Jew, and the book has some of the limitations we should expect in such a work. He has no such clear ideas of a future life as are found in the 'Wisdom of Solomon,' no definite Messianic expectation, and no personification of Wisdom. But Ben Sira has a firm grasp of the great truths of the Old Testament. He is sure that, despite of everything, God is wholly good (xxxix. 33), and that, in the end, piety will be rewarded and wickedness punished. The magnificent passage in praise of famous men (xliv. 1-15) is well known. Ben Sira, like the author of the Epistle to the

¹ With some corruptions and later additions, due, Dr Taylor thinks, to oral teaching and tradition. Probably collections of extracts from the book were circulated in various parts. It seems certain that such collections of extracts from popular religious works were not uncommon. The fragment known as the 'Sayings of Jesus,' recently discovered in Egypt, may have been one of such collections. It has been suggested that St James sometimes (for instance, chap. iv. 6) quotes from another such collection used by pious Jews.

Hebrews, has his muster-roll of heroes. Like the 'Wisdom of Solomon,' the 'Wisdom of Ben Sira' appeals to the past history of the Chosen People as an encouragement for the future. Such teaching would have the full sympathy of St James, who is always turning to the great men of the race for his illustrations. In truth, the glorious past of Israel and her heroes of old were for a possession for ever. The Christian Jews were to take these with them into the new Faith of Christ. They were not to break with the past. They were to find that all that was best in their past had been fulfilled in Christ: and so they were to look forward to the future with faith and hope.

If these two books of the Apocrypha were considered by St James worthy of careful and loving study, they must not be neglected by those who wish to understand the teaching of St James himself. But we may take a wider view. No one who wishes to learn something of the preparation for Christ which was going on during the long interval between the close of the Old Testament Canon and the publication of the Epistle of St James, can neglect the study of the Apocrypha without serious loss. The inferiority of the books of the Apocrypha to the writings of the Old Testament may at once be admitted. As Churchmen, we are forbidden to put them on a level with the Canonical writings. It may further be admitted that they are at times little more than

feeble echoes of the Old Testament ; that they are often rhetorical and diffuse ; that they are sometimes unhistorical, and occasionally childish. But, when all deductions have been made, there remains much that is worthy of the most careful study. We have noble thoughts and high aspirations, an unconquered courage, and an unconquerable hope. We see in the Apocrypha, above all, the gradual development of the idea of the ' Word,' which was afterwards taken up and christianised by St John. We find there new ideas about the life after death. We see by means of the Apocrypha how the preparation for the Christ had gone on during all those years of trial and oppression which the Chosen People were called upon to bear during the interval between Malachi, the last writer of the Old Testament, and St James, most probably the first of the New.

EXCURSUS III

ON THE EXPECTATION OF THE COMING OF CHRIST IN THE EARLY CHURCH

IT is certain that St James, in common with other New Testament writers, regarded a coming of Christ to judgment as near at hand. In the Epistles to the Thessalonians, St Paul deals with the question of the Coming (or 'Presence,' to use the literal translation of the Greek) of the Lord. And, although he is careful not to speak definitely as to the time of the Coming, both he and St James speak as though there were 'a reasonable expectation of the Lord's appearing in their own time.' In later Epistles this expectation is not so prominently brought forward: but in those Epistles also it is found. Were St James and St Paul and the rest the victims of a delusion?

Now it is clear, in the first place, that the expectation was based on the words of our Lord, which have been carefully preserved for us by St Matthew in his 24th chapter, by St Mark in his 13th chapter, and by St Luke in his 21st chapter.¹

¹ St Luke, as his manner is, sometimes explains the words

In that discourse our Lord over and over again points out that the event He is prophesying is *near at hand*. Even the passage which seems to refer to some far-distant Advent (St Matt. xxiv. 29-31) is introduced by the words, "*Immediately* after the tribulation of these days." And at the conclusion of the prophecy we have the words, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled."

And our Lord makes it perfectly clear that the historic event to which He is referring is the siege and destruction of Jerusalem (and the consequent overthrow of the old order of things) by the Roman armies under Titus. Nor can anyone who realises the supreme importance of the destruction of Jerusalem in the history of the Church, as well as in the history of the world, fail to see that in very truth it was a coming of Christ to punish and to save.¹ If we ask whether

of his two predecessors. For instance, he explains for his Gentile readers the expression "Abomination of desolation" by the phrase "When ye see Jerusalem encompassed by armies."

¹ 'There is reason to believe that the true significance and grandeur of that great event are very little appreciated by many. The destruction of Jerusalem was not a mere thrilling incident in the drama of history, like the siege of Troy or the downfall of Carthage, closing a chapter in the annals of a State or a people. It was an event which has no parallel in history. It was the outward and visible sign of a great epoch in the Divine government of the world. It

such language as that of St Matthew xxiv. 29-31 can refer to anything short of the Final Advent, we must remember that the imagery employed is that of the Book of Daniel and other prophetic writers, such as Isaiah (xiii. 10) and Ezekiel (xxxii. 7), who frequently use such language to describe times of change and sudden revolution. Our Lord, speaking "as one of the old prophets," may well have adopted their language here and applied it to the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

And of course to Jews, like St James's readers, the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the old faith had a special meaning and importance. These things meant to them deliverance from persecution and sorrow, but they meant also the loss of much that they had held dear. It was the birthday of their new life; but the travail-pangs (St Mark xiii. 8) were bitter.

But is this all? Certainly not. Our Lord

was the close of one dispensation and the commencement of another. It marked the inauguration of a new order of things. The peculiar relation between the Most High and the covenant nation was dissolved. The Messianic kingdom . . . so long predicted, hoped for, prayed for, was now fully come. The final act of the King was to sit upon the throne of His glory and judge His people. This is the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem according to the shewing of the Word of God. It was not an isolated fact, a solitary catastrophe,—it was the centre of a group of related and coincident events, not only in the material but in the spiritual world.'—J. S. Russell, *The Parousia*.

speaks here as a prophet, and so we must apply the rules of prophetic interpretation to His prophecy. In all such prophecies we have, (1) the immediate historic reference, and (2) the ultimate fulfilment of which the impending event is the type and partial fulfilment. This is the case, for example, with the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah, and it is in a special degree the case with this prophecy of our Lord. The destruction of Jerusalem¹ is no isolated event. It is a type and figure of the Second Advent. It is one of those comings of Christ which will culminate in the Great Coming. And so the language used, like that of the old prophets, looks onward from the immediate historic fulfilment to the final consummation.

If, then, our Lord is referring primarily to the destruction of Jerusalem in His prophecy, were the writers of the Epistles mistaken in their interpretation of the Lord's words? No doubt they were mistaken as to the *nature* of that Coming, though they were right as to the fact and the near approach of it. They expected a Final Coming, not

¹ It may be convenient if we remind ourselves of the important dates of this period. A.D. 63, Joshua the peasant first appears in the streets of Jerusalem with his cry of 'Woe! Woe!' A.D. 66, civil war between the extremists (Zealots) and the 'Moderates.' A.D. 67, beginning of the Roman campaign. A.D. 70 (April), beginning of the siege; July 17, ceasing of the daily sacrifices; August 10, burning of the Temple; September, fall of the entire city.

a type of the Final Coming. But, even granting that they were so far mistaken, their mistake does not affect the ethical value of their teaching: nay, it increases it. Our Lord 'did mean His disciples to' expect His coming,' and He bids His Church to-day to expect it. As to the time of that Final Coming both He and His Apostles say that it has not been revealed (St Matt. xxiv. 36, 1 Thess. v. 1, 2); but that very uncertainty makes the duty of watching for it more imperative. By prayer and patience and labour the followers of Christ will be best preparing for the Final Coming. There have been various times in the history of the Church when the expectation of the near approach of the Second Coming has been specially strong. On the other hand, there have been times—perhaps the present is one of them—in which the cry of unbelief is loudest: "Where is the promise of His coming?" In both such times there is need of a reinforcement of the teaching of the New Testament. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise." "One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands."

Christ's promise to His Church is that He is with her always (St Matt. xxviii. 20). If only we will believe that, and live in the light of His presence, by so doing we shall be best preparing ourselves for the Final Presence.

EXCURSUS IV

ON ST JAMES V. 13-16 IN ITS RELATION TO JEWISH CUSTOM AND TO CHRISTIAN PRACTICE

THE key to the interpretation of this passage, as of other parts of our Epistle, is to be found by reference to contemporary Jewish customs. When a man was ill it was the practice for the holiest of the Rabbis in the neighbourhood to go, either by himself or with others, to the sick man's house and exhort him to confession of sins. Allusions to this custom are to be found in the Talmud.¹ The longest and most interesting of these runs somewhat as follows:—

‘From the time when a man goes up to (*i.e.* takes to) his bed, they come to him and say, “Words neither revive one nor do they kill” . . . (After exhorting the sick man to set his worldly affairs in order, as Isaiah did Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 1, if he sees that the sick man is dangerously ill the visitor says), “Confess before thou diest, for there are many who have confessed and died not: others who did not confess have died. Again, perhaps on the merit of thy confession thou wilt recover.”

¹ See also Eccclus. xxxviii. 1-15.

If he can confess with his mouth, he does so. If not, he confesses in his heart. Both the man who confesses with his mouth and the man who confesses in his heart are alike, provided that he directs his mind to God and his understanding is clear.'

In other passages we read: 'He who comes to a sick man says, "May the Lord have mercy on you."' 'He who comes to pay a visit to a sick man must not sit on a bed or on a chair; but let him wrap his mantle round him (*i.e.* to shew reverence) and pray the mercy of God for the man. There is a Divine presence at the head of the sick man.'

We find further that the eminent Rabbi Akiba swept and watered the room for his sick pupil; and there are many other indications which go to prove that, in the absence of the regular physician, these reverend visitors acted as doctors (doubtless anointing the sick man with oil) and sick-nurses.

I am told by Dr Schechter (Reader in Rabbinic and Talmudic Literature in the University of Cambridge), to whose great kindness I am indebted for the above extracts, that this custom still obtains in South-East Europe, where there are many Jews.

St James, then, is exhorting his readers to continue to observe the godly practice of their pre-Christian days. The Christian clergy take the place of the Jewish Rabbis, but otherwise little, if any, change would be made. As to the anointing spoken of, oil was a recognised remedy among the Jews, and indeed throughout the East generally

(Isa. i. 6; St Mark vi. 13; St Luke x. 34. Josephus tells us that Herod was ordered a bath of oil by his physician in his last illness). St James regards the oil as a means of *bodily* healing, while confession of sins and the intercessions of the clergy are for the healing of his *soul*. The Roman rite of Extreme Unction, though founded on this passage, developed in a different direction. As now used it has no reference to bodily healing. The priest says as he touches each part with the oil, 'By this holy unction, and by His most tender mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatsoever sins thou hast committed.' But in the lives of some of the early saints, especially Egyptian saints, and in some of the earliest Liturgies, the main use of oil is, like St James's, medicinal. St Pachomius, St Macarius of Alexandria, Benjamin of Vitria, and others are said to have healed sickness by means of oil.¹ In the Sacramentary of Serapion—a very ancient document—the prayer used in the anointing of the sick runs: 'We pray Thee to send healing power into this oil that it may be for those anointed the means of driving out all disease and all sickness, of sending out every evil spirit . . . of expelling every fever and chill and every weakness.' Then there follows a petition for *spiritual* healing. The modern Roman rite therefore has departed both from the teaching of St James and from primitive practice when it leaves out of sight the ancient use of the oil.

¹ See *Journal of Theological Studies*, Numbers I. and II.

Edifying and comforting as that rite may be, it is different from the practice enjoined by St James.¹

The thought of the close connexion between sin and illness is one found elsewhere (*e.g.* St Luke v. 18-24, xiii. 16; St John ix. 2; 1 Cor. xi. 30). In a certain sense it anticipates the teaching of modern science that illness is caused by some transgression of the laws of nature on the part either of the sick man or his ancestors. In most cases of illness, science tells us, the question of the disciples might be asked in a different form: "Which did sin, this man or his parents, that he is thus afflicted?"

From what has been said it seems clear that verse 16, which enjoins confession, refers to the case of the sick man. The word "therefore," found in the best manuscripts, though omitted in the Authorised Version, links this verse closely with the preceding one, and the words "that ye may be healed" make the reference practically certain. The more general question as to the lawfulness of confession to a priest, to justify which this passage is often quoted, does not appear to arise fairly out of this verse. St James, following the ancient custom of his people, is exhorting the

¹ As a general rule, it is administered only to those who are sick unto death, either immediately before or after the Viaticum. In the First Prayer-Book of Edward VI. there is provision for anointing, if the sick man desired it. In the prayers there given the restoration to bodily health is combined with the inward anointing of the soul.

sick man to confess to the elders of the Church—who are assumed to be men of deep spirituality. The prayers of such men are effectual. They prevail with God. Except that the exhortation is more definite than that of our Prayer-Book, it agrees with the words of our Rubric in the Visitation of the Sick: 'Here shall the sick man be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter.' And then, leaving the special point of the visitation of the sick, St James passes on to the more general one of the efficacy of the prayers and intercessions of holy men, drawing his illustration, as usual, from the Old Testament. It is interesting to notice that the Jewish custom to which St James is referring has another point of contact with our office for the Visitation of the Sick. Just as the Rabbis would begin by exhorting the sick man to 'set his house in order,' so our Rubric says, 'And if he hath not before disposed of his goods, let him then be admonished to make his will, and to declare his debts, what he oweth, and what is owing unto him ; for the better discharging of his conscience, and the quietness of his executors.'

It is of course possible that St James may be referring to *miraculous* healing when he speaks of the anointing with oil. In St Mark vi. 13 we read of the disciples that they anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them, and in 1 Cor. xii. 9 there is mention of gifts of healing. But it is

quite clear that neither he nor his readers would expect that bodily healing would follow in every case. The prayer of faith would be said; the means would be used; and then the result would be left in the hands of God. "Thy will be done" must form part of every faithful prayer.

In regard to the expression "elders of the Church" there can be no doubt that by the phrase St James means the clergy. In the only other passage in the New Testament where it occurs (Acts xx. 17) it certainly has that meaning. The words 'elder' and 'bishop' were used in the early times of the Church to denote the clergy—the former being derived from Jewish institutions and being a title of respect, the latter being derived from Greek institutions and denoting responsibility. Later on, as the Apostles died or drew near to death, the latter word came to be used exclusively for the episcopal order which succeeded to the special responsibilities that had (except in the case of the Church at Jerusalem) been exercised by the Apostles. But, although the term 'elder' is derived from Judaism, yet St James assigns to the Christian elder functions which did not belong to his Jewish prototype. While the Jewish elders or presbyters were 'merely judicial officers, and not officers of worship, nor teachers, the Christian presbyters have assigned to them by St James a ministry of healing both of body and soul.'¹

¹ Gore, *The Ministry of the Christian Church*, p. 253.

EXCURSUS V

THE TEACHING OF ST JAMES ON OATHS

IN regard to sins of speech St James's treatment is well-nigh, if not quite, exhaustive. In the body of his Epistle he warns his readers against too great love of talking, unrestrained speaking, eagerness to correct others, boasting, railing, cursing others, and similar sins. But one specially Jewish vice of speech he leaves for the postscript, which is thoroughly Jewish in thought and sentiment. It is plain that he has not left it to the last because he considered it of less importance than others. On the contrary, he says that swearing is to be avoided "above all (these other) things." We often find indeed that the writers of the Epistles reserve some of their most solemn and impressive warnings for the postscript of their letters.

We are at the outset reminded of the words of our Lord found in Matt. v. 34. From that passage it is clear that the 'oaths' spoken of were means adopted by Jews for strengthening their assertions, by the use either of the Divine Name or phrases like 'by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by my

head' (compare St Matt. xxiii. 16 ; St Mark xiv. 71 of St Peter). It is further clear that Jewish casuistry had developed an elaborate system of distinctions between oaths that were binding and oaths that were not binding.¹ One of the Rabbinic sayings ran thus: 'As heaven and earth shall pass away, so passeth away the oath taken by them.'

The principle underlying our Lord's prohibition is this: God is present always. God is always near us. We cannot escape from His presence. But by taking an oath we solemnly put ourselves in the presence of God *on some special occasion*. If this leads us to forget that we are always in His presence, and that *all* our words should be guided by that consideration, then the taking of oaths is the occasion of sin. All the words of Christians should be spoken as in God's presence. If they are, then their assertions and denials will be as binding as any oath.

In so speaking our Lord spiritualises the old law of Lev. xix. 12. Perhaps He even regarded it as given, like the law of divorce (St Mark x. 5), "for the hardness of their hearts," because the Israelites were as yet not ready for the higher law.

The *ground* of St James's prohibition seems to be somewhat different from that of the Sermon on the Mount. He says that oaths are, or may be, the expression of an angry and impatient spirit, and, as such, should be avoided by the Christian

¹ See Gore, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 75.

in view of the Coming of the Lord. But, in their prohibition of oaths, our Lord and St James agree.

The question still remains: Is this prohibition *absolute*? Does it forbid the use of oaths in any circumstances? That can hardly be. Against it there are—(1) The teaching of the Old Testament (Deut. vi. 13; Ps. lxiii. 11; Isa. lxv. 16; Jer. iv. 2,¹ etc.); (2) the practice of our Lord and His Apostles (St Matt. xxvi. 63; Rom. i. 9, ix. 1; 2 Cor. i. 23, xi. 31, etc.);² (3) the practice of the primitive Church. Tertullian (*Apolog.* 32) says that Christians swear ‘by the safety of the emperor.’ The same oath is mentioned by Athanasius (*Ep. ad Monachos*), who himself on one occasion demanded of Constantius that his accusers should be put on oath. Under the Christian emperors oaths were invariably required both in civil and in criminal cases. In elections to ecclesiastical offices the electors were required to take an oath. The candidate for ordination swore on the Gospels.

¹ There is a Jewish Midrash on Jer. iv. 2 which is interesting in this connexion. It is as follows:—‘The Holy One, blessed be He, said unto Israel, Think not that ye may swear by My Name even in truth. Ye may not do so unless you have obtained that high degree of sanctity by which Abraham, Joseph, and Job were distinguished.’ ‘If thou fear thy God and art exclusively in His service, thou mayest swear by His name’ (*i.e.* if your whole life is lived near to God you may take the oath without sin).

² Compare Heb. vi. 16–18, where the taking of an oath is spoken of as a matter of course.

But at the same time, while it is clear that the prohibition of oath-taking is not absolute, yet our Lord and St James hold up to us an ideal, and shew us a more excellent way. It is best (as even Philo tells us) not to swear at all, but so to speak the truth always that all our words are as good as oaths. If the taking of oaths causes people to make a distinction between the statements supported by oaths and the statements not so supported, then it becomes of the nature of sin. In an imperfect state of society oaths may be lawful, as we believe a just war is lawful. But the Christian must look and pray for the time when oaths and wars alike shall cease, because all men shall be governed by the perfect law of Christ.

EXCURSUS VI

ST JAMES AND MODERN LIFE

ST JAMES, in writing his Epistle, had a very clear and definite object in view. He does not treat, as St Paul does, of the deeper mysteries of the Faith. His Epistle is in no sense a theological treatise. His object was practical and ethical. His ethics are, of course, definitely and decisively Christian. He engrafts on to Judaism certain ideas and certain thoughts which could have been derived only from Christ. His praise of meekness and gentleness (iii. 13), his deep sense of sin (i. 14, 15, iii. 2) and of the need for repentance, the stress he lays on the necessity for Faith (i. 6, ii. 5, v. 15), Hope, and Love,—all this and more, to say nothing of his allusions to our Lord Jesus Christ, make it quite clear that he is writing from the Christian standpoint. But, just as the Master Himself begins His teaching with the Sermon on the Mount, so St James, the earliest, as it would seem, of the New Testament letter-writers, begins the series with an ethical treatise. By and by in orderly development would come letters dealing with the mysteries of the

Faith—those deep things of God which Christ entrusted to His disciples that in due season they might teach them to the multitudes as they were able to bear them.¹ But there must be no hurry. Many of St James's readers would not be able to receive the profounder doctrines of the Faith. They would be to them incomprehensible ; and St James does not intend to "cast pearls before swine." He is, in fact, writing to men not far advanced in Christianity. He appeals therefore primarily to 'those sanctions which every Jew from his childhood had been accustomed to regard as final.' 'Moreover, there are passages in the Epistle which seem to shew that St James at times looks aside to address Jews who were not Christians at all ; and it may be that even when he addresses Christian converts he deliberately prefers arguments which would weigh with Jew and Christian alike.'² Those Jews to whom he wrote were on the whole respectable, decorous people, free from those grosser vices which were so terribly common in the Gentile world, and, as we see from St Paul's Epistles, not unknown even among Gentile Christians. But his readers had their own special vices and sins, not less injurious to the life of the soul than the grosser sins of the Gentiles.

Now it may seem at first sight strange that an Epistle written in these circumstances and with

¹ St Mark iv. 11, 12, 21, 22.

² Plummer, *St James*, pp. 113, 114.

these limitations should be in many respects thoroughly *modern* in tone—that it should by anticipation deal with many vices specially prevalent in modern society. But that is what we are always finding in the Bible, and it is one of the strongest proofs of its inspiration. Lawgiver and historian and prophet and apostle,—all these Jews have their message for us in these latter days. And St James, the most Jewish of all the New Testament writers, quite as much as any of those who wrote before or after him, has his special message for us who, in the altered and more complex conditions of our lives, retain a great deal of the human nature which was so strong in St James's readers.

I. The root-sin from which spring evil-speaking, ambition, self-seeking, and the like, is, in St James's view, *double-mindedness* (i. 8). Over and over again he points out that these other sins arise from it. It spoils our prayers (i. 6 contrasted with v. 16¹); it causes undue respect for mere wealth and position (ii. 4); it produces a barren, dead "faith" (ii. 14); it causes the strange anomaly of blessing and cursing from the same mouth (iii. 8, 9). The "double-minded" are especially called upon to

¹ St James is of course speaking, not of the passing doubts and difficulties of devout men, nor of the difficulties of the man who earnestly desires to believe but cannot, but of the doubts unassailed and unresisted which result in a habit of mind paralysing to the life of the soul.

purify their hearts if they would draw nigh to God (iv. 8). The evil tongue is an "unstable" plague (iii. 8). The *false* wisdom produces "instability" (iii. 15). On the other hand, in his analysis of the *true* wisdom¹ St James mentions as one of its characteristics that it goes forward without any hesitation or uncertainty (iii. 17). We may think perhaps that to St James, with his absolute loyalty to the truth as he knew it, and his absolute honesty, the sin of double-mindedness was peculiarly detestable. At any rate he is always girding at it. But this sin is characteristically modern. There are in these days so many voices to listen to, and so much to distract us, that it is fatally easy to fall into the 'Agnostic' state of mind that is certain of nothing, and to find ourselves tossed to and fro and carried away with every wind of doctrine. In one of his dramatic poems, Arthur Hugh Clough,² who portrays with wonderful insight many of the phases of modern thought and life, has pictured

¹ It may be interesting to observe how St James analyses this heavenly wisdom: (1) In relation to the possessor, it is *chaste*; (2) in relation to others, it is *peaceable*, (a) actively ("reasonable"), (b) passively ("easy to be persuaded"); but (3) it is, like every other valuable quality, *practical* ("full of pity and good works"); and then (4) once more in relation to the possessor it is "without uncertainty" and consequently "without hypocrisy."

² I am indebted to the admirable sermon of the Dean of Christ Church in the volume before referred to (*The Spirit of Discipline*) for my acquaintance with this poem.

for us the career and character of a "double-minded" man, whom he calls Dipsychus, after the Greek word for double-minded used by St James. Towards the end of the piece he puts into the mouth of the evil spirit a passage vividly describing the result of such a habit of mind on the man's character :

‘ Will you go on thus
Until death end you? If indeed it does,
For what it does, none knows. Yet as for you,
You'll hardly have the courage to die outright ;
You'll somehow halve even it. Methinks I see you,
Through everlasting limbos of void time
Twirling and twiddling ineffectively,
And indeterminately swaying for ever.’

Such a character is too common in these days. We want definite aims and clear purposes. We need nowadays the grace to march straight forward, never turning to the right hand or to the left. We need a firm grip of the great doctrines of the Faith. We need a single-hearted purpose to serve and love the Master. Therefore we need the teaching of St James.

II. In regard to sins of speech, again, to which St James devotes so large a space in his Epistle, if we see what he includes under this head, we shall at once feel that he is attacking a *modern* vice. Such things as profane swearing, crude and harsh judgments of others, and complaints about our lot in life, are sins common to all ages and all

periods. But there are two points on which St James lays stress, both of great importance for us to-day. In the first place, he deals largely with religious controversy. The religious discussions of the Jews were carried on orally. As a rule, we carry on ours by means of 'religious' newspapers, pamphlets, and the press generally. But the result in both cases is the same, except that, since '*littera scripta manet*,' it may well be worse now. There is the obscuring of the real issues, the desire for a dialectical triumph rather than for the victory of truth. There is the same bitterness and injustice, the same failure to appreciate the point of view of an opponent. We need nowadays some of that Heavenly Wisdom which is 'sweetly reasonable' and considerate for others, and ready to receive truth from whatever quarter it comes.

Then there is the modern desire to teach others (St Jas. iii. 1). There are 'many teachers' to-day—some instructing by word of mouth in the old fashion; others appealing to wider audiences by the aid of the printing-press. Certainly all need to be reminded that the office of teacher, however and wherever that office is exercised, is one involving heavy responsibilities. The work of a teacher nowadays is 'a perilous as well as a glorious service.' Before undertaking it a man is bound to ask himself whether he has the absolutely essential qualification—the Heavenly Wisdom (St Jas. iii. 17, 18), and to remember that "in

many things we *all* stumble" (iii. 2)—that there is no such thing as infallibility in any human teacher, 'even the youngest.'

III. The third subject which bulks large in St James's Epistle is the question of riches. It must be admitted that there is much which is on the surface perplexing in the language both of the Gospels and of St James's Epistle on this question. The earlier teaching about wealth is put in a brief, uncompromising form, without limitations or exceptions, which is at once impressive and difficult. But we have to remember that this was a method largely used by Jewish teachers, and adopted on occasion both by our Lord and by St Paul. It was intended to stimulate thought. We do not get (and it would be most undesirable that we should) complete solutions of modern difficulties in the New Testament, but rather great, broad principles which we must apply for ourselves.¹ One of these is that the possession of riches is a dangerous thing, and that their possessor incurs grave responsibility. A man who is merely rich—who is not prepared to give up everything for Christ if need be—cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

St James, speaking evidently from bitter experi-

¹ Compare the teaching of St Paul in (*e.g.*) 1 Tim. vi. 17-19. Passages like this make it clear that a Christian might possess riches if only he realised that he was a steward of his wealth, bound not to use it for selfish or worldly ends.

ence, lays special stress on the *dangers* of wealth. The rich merchant was in danger of forgetting that it was God who made him to differ from another. When once he forgot that, it was easy for him to forget also his duty to his neighbour, and to oppress and cheat, to 'sweat' and crush the poor, while he lived in excessive luxury himself. The undue respect paid to mere riches must tend to divide still further class from class, and to make the rich more arrogant and proud than ever. It is good (he tells us) for the soul's health of the rich man that he should be humbled by the loss of his wealth (i. 10). We cannot refuse to listen to this teaching of St James now, when the perils and dangers and responsibilities of wealth are certainly no less than they were in his day. 'We cannot doubt that St James would have approved of what has already been done by the State in England to ameliorate the condition of the poorer part of the community . . . Outside of the action of the State there will still remain plenty of scope for the influence of the Church in drawing classes together, making them realise more and more the tie of brotherhood, discountenancing wasteful self-indulgence, . . . compelling all to recognise their responsibility to God for the use of the talents He has entrusted to them.'¹

But, besides faithful rebukes of vices prevalent in modern times, there are in St James encourage-

¹ Mayor, *St James*, p. 207.

ments specially helpful to-day. We are impatient and in a hurry to see results. St James bids us to be patient, while we go on quietly and hopefully with the work which is, after all, not ours but God's. We need a firm and unshaken faith in God which will give definiteness and purpose to our lives. St James is always insisting on the importance of the possession of this. We need to be reminded, as St James reminds us, of the power of the prayer of the righteous man for himself and for others, of the importance of intercession as well as of the importance of praying for spiritual graces for ourselves. We need that gift of wisdom of which St James speaks which will enable us to form just judgments,¹ and get a clear view of human life and the moral government of the world. Above all, we need the teaching of St James on the dignity of man, made at the first in God's image, and destined by Him to become like his Maker. That doctrine is the true corrective of modern pessimism. If sometimes it seems hard to accept, in face of the condition of human nature as we see it, sinful and weak and degraded, it is nevertheless eternally true. Sin and temptation are ugly facts; but St James tells us that sin may be resisted and temptation overcome; that we may rise to the height of our true

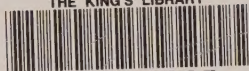
¹ Compare the words of our Collect for Whitsunday: 'Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things.'

destiny. If, with St James, we have a firm grip of the first article of the Creed, 'I believe in God the Father,' we shall go on till we accept the whole of it with all our hearts. We shall believe in 'the Forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting.'

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